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CHAPTER I

With the *Harmony* to Labrador—Ramah—The Happy Eskimos—The Messengers and their Food—Eskimos on Board—Landing at Okak—Aksunai—The Eskimos at Work.

THE beginning of this book is in the cabin of a small steamer somewhere on the North Atlantic Ocean. To be a little more exact, the ship was the *Harmony*, belonging to the Moravian Missions, of London, and we were on our way to the coast of Labrador. It was in the month of October, in the year 1903; and if you have been upon the Atlantic in October, even in a great liner, you will know something about the roughness of the sea. But the plucky little ship plunged her nose into the waves, and shook her sturdy shoulders like a dog, and rolled along in the teeth of the winds that seemed always to be howling. "Head winds," the captain called them; and it was not until afterwards, when

we were snug in the shelter of a Labrador harbour, that he told me that those winds were some of the famous equinoctial gales. But in spite of the winds, and in spite of the roaring and pounding and battering waves, the little ship battled along, as though she were a living thing and knew how much depended on her. For the *Harmony* was carrying food and stores for the villages where the missionaries of the Moravian Church are preaching the Gospel to the Eskimos of Northern Labrador, and she was carrying, too, the beginnings of a hospital for the Eskimos.

So day by day we tossed and rolled along, always nearer, when night fell and we laid us down to rest, to the frozen land where our work was waiting: and you may imagine how pleased we all were when land was sighted, and when the steward woke us up from our afternoon nap with a great shout, and we rolled over and looked through our port-holes at the bare black rocks and snow-covered hills in the distance. This was Labrador, the land of the Eskimos.

In the morning we were at anchor off Ramah, in a deep little harbour among the hills. The solitary missionary was in transports of delight. "I had almost given you up," he said, "you are so late": and he went

on to tell us how only the night before he had told two men to make ready to tramp over the hills to Hebron, seventy miles away, to ask for news and stores.

No wonder he was pleased: all his worries had vanished away in a moment. He had been anxious, poor man, about the winter. "Our butter was nearly done," he said, "and we had no fresh vegetables or eggs"—for Ramah is too cold for gardening, and as for hens, well, the poor things get such rheumatism in their legs that it is not possible to keep them through all the bitter cold of the winter. "We had flour," said the missionary, "and I think the Eskimos could have managed, for they eat seal-meat and dried fish; but I do not know how the children would have gone on, for we had not much tinned milk." And so he was as pleased as could be, for here was the *Harmony* with the stores; and not only that, for the captain was handing over a great bulging bag of letters and papers and parcels, and so once more the lonely little settlement of Ramah had news from home. There was no doubt that the Eskimos themselves were as pleased to see the ship as the missionary was: they had been banging away with their guns since daybreak, and now we could see flags on the houses in honour of the day, and the people

themselves were around us, on the deck and in their boats, beaming with happiness. Soon the work of unloading was begun, and everybody, men and women alike, was hard at his task, while the little children capered about on the jetty, watching and shouting and trying to help.

While we sat chatting in the cabin two Eskimos came in; small shock-headed men, clad in corduroy trousers and oily blanket smocks.

Their little restless eyes gazed about with wonderment, the while they gabbled strange words in an endless stream.

As fast as one paused for breath, the other took up the tale, and I could not help smiling at their obvious earnestness about something. The missionary sat gravely listening to their speeches, occasionally giving a laconic "Ahaila" (yes); and at the end they seemed mightily pleased, for they went out grinning, with many a sly nudge at one another, and "Nakomêk" (thank you) to the company generally.

Then we got the explanation. "Those are the two men that I told to go to Hebron, and they have been to ask whether they need go, now that the ship has come. I expect there will be feasting in Ramah to-day, for their next

question was whether they might eat the provisions I had given them for the journey."

It came out later in the day that one of the men had eaten his pork and biscuits as soon as he got them, I suppose as a sort of foundation for his journey. Actually on the road, he would have been content to chew an unpromising slab of tough dried fish; but I think he must have felt rather relieved when the missionary gave him permission to demolish the pork.

The ship did not dally in Ramah; we only stayed one day, because of the lateness of the season; and on the morning of the 7th of November, 1903, we dropped our anchor in Okak Bay, in sight of the biggest of the Eskimo villages; and there, at the old settlement of Okak, among the dull little huts that dotted the hillside, and close to the tapering tower of the Mission Church, I saw my future home.

There seemed to be plenty of bustle and stir at Okak. The paths between the huts seemed alive with people, all dressed in proper Eskimo style, with hooded smocks and knee-boots. Men and women were running from their homes, crowding to the little wooden jetty in front of the storehouse, and the children, dressed like small copies of their parents, were

racing in the same direction. Soon the sea was dotted with boats, big boats and little boats, all looking as though a touch would turn them over, so crowded with people they were. Here and there came a man in a skin canoe, bent on the same errand as the boats. The people were coming to greet the new-comers, and to take a good look at the ship.

They came tumbling aboard, with smiles and hand-shakes and shouts of "Aksunai"—which we all repeated because it seemed the proper thing to say; and when they spoke to us in their queer long words, of which we could not understand one single syllable, we just smiled, smiled our broadest, and they smiled back at us and seemed quite well satisfied.

There was a crowd around the door of the cook's galley, where the smell of cookery and the sight of the pots and pans seemed to be causing a good deal of excitement. One old soul, who seemed to be a cripple, was smiling so broadly at the cook that he secretly gave her a ship's biscuit and a piece of cold pork, which she pocketed with broader smiles than ever, and mutterings of "thankee, thankee." "Pocketing" is the only word I can find to describe what she did with the pork and the biscuit; for she seemed to have no pocket as

we understand things: she simply dropped her prize into the depths of the great hood of her smock, and wandered along the deck to see more sights. Presently I saw her with a crowd of others peering down the open sky-light of the engine-room, wide-eyed with wonder at the strange and shining things she saw down there, and evidently enjoying the warm and steamy draught that came blowing upwards.

When we went ashore there was an Eskimo waiting to hand us into the boat. He stood at the bottom of the steps; and as I trod carefully down the wooden gangway all crusted with hard black ice and all a-move with the swaying of the ship, I looked down at him. Here was a real Eskimo, just like the pictures that I had in my mind; a black-haired, shaggy-headed little man, with broad shoulders and strong arms, a heavy, muscular little figure not more than five feet tall, and when he looked up at me it was a face from the picture-books that looked into mine, a square smooth face with an oily-looking yellow skin and ruddy patches on the cheeks. His lumpy cheek-bones seemed well padded with fat; his nose was a small flat dab; and he had a pair of restless little brown eyes that twinkled out of narrow slits. I handed my wife down the

slippery steps, and the little man helped her into the boat. His smattering of English had a quaint ring with it : " Take care, lady, boat plenty wet—fine day, sir " ; and I shook hands with this characteristic-looking Eskimo, and thought that I should like to know him better. My wish came true, for Paulus and I became very good friends, and his face is in many of the pictures that come to my mind from the years that I spent in that little village of Okak. He was a really human Eskimo, kindly and generous, easily angry, but as easily smiling again. He was sometimes quarrelsome, sometimes awkward, but friendly at heart : he gave me some troublesome moments, but he did me many a little kindness—and he saved my life once, but that is another story.

There was a keen wind blowing as the men rowed us across from the ship to the shore, and they had hard work to get along. " Aksuse " shouted the steersman, and the rowers bent their backs and pulled their hardest. Every time they flagged, every time he saw a gust of wind coming, his cry was the same—" Aksuse." Aksuse—be strong ; it was the Eskimo greeting, the same word that met us at Ramah when we first touched land, the " Aksunai " of welcome given to several at once ; and I saw

that the meaning has not dropped out of it as it has out of some greetings.

"Aksuse," shouted the steersman; "be strong—put your hearts into it—do your best," and the oarsmen obeyed with a will. What more noble greeting could you imagine than this old Eskimo password, the people's greeting through all time?

"Aksuse," shouted the folk as we walked along the jetty, and we could not but feel heartened for our task by the very sincerity of the welcome. One man thought to go one better; he had a trifle of English to air: he touched my wife's arm, and held out his hand. "Good evening, sir," he said!

And this in the middle of the morning:

I was very much interested in the great corner-stones of the foundations for the new hospital; they were so ponderous that I wondered however they had been raised into place, for in a land like Labrador there are no great cranes and engines such as we see in England. I asked the missionary about those stones, because the building had been his work.

He looked at me with a smile: "We just pulled all together," he said. Then he went on to explain how they had made a tripod of tree-stems, slung a pulley from the top, passed a thick rope over the pulley and tied it to the

stone, and then got hold of the rope and pulled all together !

It sounded very simple ; but I looked again at those great corner-stones and wished that I had been there to see the pulling.

I understood it better during the afternoon, for the wind grew stronger, and the oarsmen were unable to row the lighters ashore. The work of unloading threatened to come to a stop, and the captain dared not delay with the Labrador winter treading on his heels. " Ajornarpok " (it cannot be done), said the men at the oars. " All right," said the captain, " get a rope—get the women—get everybody, and let them all pull." As soon as the word went round there was a stampede to the jetty ; women came rushing out of the huts, tying bandanna handkerchiefs over their heads to keep their hair tidy in the wind ; children raced from house to house, gathering their friends. " Come and pull," was the password.

By the time the people were ready the rope had been tied to the lighter and passed ashore. The mate on the ship blew his whistle ; the man in charge of the rope on the jetty waved his hand in answer and yelled to the people. " Attê " (get at it), he shouted, and the people began to pull.

They tramped along the jetty, clinging to

the rope, and singing in time to the march-like beating of their boots on the boards. "Attê, attê," they cried when the pace began to slacken, and then sang and tramped the faster. There was a constant stream up one side with the rope, and down the other side to get a fresh hold, and as fast as the rope came ashore the man at the end was coiling the slack into a neat pile. A jollier lot of people I have never seen; they sang and tramped, and laughed and sang again, as if they had not a care in the world; and all the while the lighter came steadily on, rising to the waves and breaking them down, stopping for nothing, but riding shorewards. I went on board the ship to watch their work, and from the deck I could hear the sound of their singing borne on a wind that whistled through the rigging. This was "pulling all together," a practical illustration of the old proverb, "Where there's a will there's a way"—and that seems to be how difficulties are overcome in Labrador.

CHAPTER II

Living in tents—Tents and dogs—Bob's tent—The tent-stones—A tent in a tangle—Bob's family—Bob's boots—In the rain—Old Tuglavi.

THE first missionaries who went to Labrador, now nearly a hundred and fifty years ago, must have found their work made all the more difficult by the way in which the Eskimos are used to wander from one place to another. But the missionaries made the best of it: they built their churches where the people had their winter homes, and so there came to be a number of what we might call mission villages here and there along the coast. It is much the same to-day as it was in those olden times: the Eskimos spend the winter in their wooden huts, within sound of the church bell and within reach of the mission store; but when winter is over they go off to some favourite hunting or fishing-place of their own, and live in tents.

Tents are ideal summer dwellings for a people who are, at heart, wanderers; and the

Eskimos are restless beings—they like to follow the call of their hunting, and to make their temporary home where their work is. Not many years ago the tents, all along the coast, were of reindeer skins stitched together with sinew and stretched on poles with the hairy side outward; and no doubt some of the people will live in skin tents to the end, so loth are they to give up the customs of their lives.

But calico tents are becoming very popular —and a good thing, too. They are lighter and airier than skin tents, and afford just as good a protection from the weather; but the Eskimos like them because they are so easily mended. If an August storm tears a tent to ribbons or hurls it bodily into the raging sea, the owner and his family have no need to spend the rest of the season packed like sardines on the floor of some other man's tent, waiting for the next year's reindeer hunt to come round before making a bid for a new one; no, when the storm has passed, the father takes his boat and hies him to the store, and spends a few dollars of his fish-money on a roll of calico which his wife will very speedily turn into a tent.

But even this is not the chief reason to Eskimo minds. Portability is the thing; and

a tent that packs up into a neat little bundle, and can be stowed away in the bottom of a boat or can be used to cover the load on a sled without making the pile too high and top-heavy for the passengers, is a grand thing compared with the bulky heap of reindeer skin that takes up so much room. And another great thing that makes calico the favourite stuff for tents is that calico is not particularly tempting to the appetite of the dogs. I can quite well imagine that a tent of dried deer skins might prove a toothsome meal for a pack of famished sled-dogs; but I have never heard of dogs devouring a calico tent wholesale, though they are not at all averse to an occasional chew at the oil-sodden margins.

You may see the tents in the summer-time as you pass along the coast by ship—lonely tents, and tents in groups and clusters, some white and new, others grey and smoke-begrimed and rain-soaked—pitched by the edge of the sea, just out of reach of the tides. Outside the tents are the great sled-dogs, idle because it is summer-time and the sleds are put away; they skulk about and quarrel, while among them the little children are playing, building houses with the smooth stones of the beach, or gathering grasses, or dress-

ing and undressing their quaint little native dollies.

The children are not in the least afraid of the dogs; indeed it is quite the other way about, for I have seen a tiny mite of a child go and slap a great shaggy dog with his baby fists, whereupon the fierce-looking brute got up and went slinking away, howling and whining as though some awful punishment had come upon it.

Bob, the Eskimo who led me to see the sights when I first visited the village of Killinek in the far north of Labrador, took me to see his tent. He pointed along a winding stony path, and trotted amiably in front of me. "My tent," he said, as he waved his hand towards a smoke-blackened tent among the rocks. This was Bob's home: it was no more than a bunch of poles with a calico cover thrown over them; the poles stuck out through a hole in the top, and the cover was kept in place by big stones laid upon its edge. The ground was too rocky for tent-pegs, and doubtless stones were the next best thing; but I thought with a shiver of the probable fate of the tent on some wild autumn night.

"Does your tent never blow over?" I said.

He laughed. "Oh yes, it sometimes blows over when the wind is strong; but never mind, what does it matter? We can soon crawl out and set it on its poles again, and it is all right. The stones do not blow away; they stay there all the time. When the winter comes, and we can find snow to build snow houses, we leave the stones lying until we come again in the spring. I always put my tent in the same place, for it is a good place. That big rock shelters us from the north-west wind, and we can drink from that stream of water near by; besides, we are close to the sea, and I can soon launch my skin canoe and go hunting the seals. Yes, it is a good place, and I shall come again next year. Some of the people do not find good places; they go to fresh places each year; but my place is good."

His face was aglow, and I caught some of his emotion; I felt the glamour of his simple life. I thought of the many times when I have come across the rings of stones, relics of deserted tenting-places. They are generally in some grassy nook near the seashore. The rank grass grows over and among them, and the sandy space which they surround is strewn with fishbones and shells and all the other litter of Eskimo tent life. There is an air of desolation about those rings of stones. Their

A Fishing Camp

Calico tents are used as dwellings during the fishing time. Codfish, split and salted, are spread on the rocks to dry. The people live on the heads, which are not required for market. Here they are grouped about the cauldron in which they are boiling the heads for their dinner.

The Author, Home from a Winter Walk

On a winter's day, with the temperature forty or fifty degrees below freezing point, the breath freezes instantly into an icy mass. Unfortunate wearers of beards get so frosted up that they cannot open their mouths. Sea'skins are a necessity, and somebody should watch your nose for the whiteness which is the sign of frostbite.

owners have sought better places for their tents ; they have had no fortune at the fishing, and have gone to try elsewhere ; perhaps they have passed away and are forgotten.

I need hardly have asked Bob that question about his tent blowing over, for I have seen the same thing happen. I was passing along the village one day, battling my way against a howling wind, when suddenly the cover of a tent close by began to flap loudly ; the gale tore the edges from under the stones, and in less time than it takes to tell the whole thing collapsed. One moment it was a tent ; the next, before my eyes, there was just a shapeless heap of tent poles and wet calico, all in a tangle, with strange writhings going on underneath. The writhings became more lively, and presently three little Eskimo girls wriggled out at different places, all very tousled, and all looking very much surprised. They got up and shook themselves and looked at one another ; then they burst out laughing and began to try to put their home upon its legs again. I wondered what things were like underneath the tent, for poles and calico were all in a heap, and the things that had been on the floor must have been in a fine pickle if I was to judge by the way in which the ruins lashed and rocked in the wind ; but the little

girls seemed to take it all as a joke, for they shrieked with merriment as they pulled at the corners of the tent-cover and tried to get the poles clear. While they were busy at their work a woman came out of a tent close by. I suppose that she was their mother, for she held up her hands and said, "Ai, ai," as much as to say, "What a thing to happen"; then she, too, burst out laughing and went to help the girls.

However, to go back to Bob and his tent.

As we went along the path, Bob trotting in front and I following sedately behind, we came upon a little girl squatting on the ground, solemnly stirring the contents of a big cooking pot which stood upon a rough fireplace of stones. She fed the fire with bits of brushwood, and "shooed" the hungry dogs away. She looked up shyly as we passed, and I saw the family likeness at once. She had the same tumbled mop of black hair, the same little twinkling eyes, the same small nose and plump ruddy cheeks, the same expression of face, as her father. The sound of our footsteps brought three or four other small folks scrambling out of the tent, each one a repetition of the others on a different scale. They joined hands and stood in a row, gazing with awestruck eyes at the stranger. This was evidently Bob's family,

or a part of it, and a most interesting sight they made. Bob and his wife evidently practised economy at home by handing on each child's clothes, as soon as it grew too big for them, to the next on the list. The trousers that adorned the bigger boy were obviously Bob's, patched and puckered to the proper size; one little girl had a woman's skirt on, all the way up, which gave her the appearance of having stepped out of a picture-book; and every one of the children seemed to be wearing somebody else's boots. And quite right, too, I thought. These children are scrambling over the rocks all day long, romping with the dogs, and getting their clothes torn and muddied and soaked; so I rather admired the wisdom of their mother in dressing them up in nondescript garments for their play.

The children stood in a row, hand in hand, and stared at me as I came along the path: they only grunted when I said "Aksunai" to them, though a grunt is quite polite as an Eskimo way of answering; so I went past them and peeped into the tent. The half furthest from the door was evidently the sleeping-place, for it was filled by a sort of platform built of earth and moss, and spread with skins.

The mother was seated by the edge of the

bed, kneading one of her husband's boots. She looked up as we appeared, with a good-humoured smile on her handsome, ruddy face, and quietly went on with her kneading. Other boots, turned inside out to dry, hung from the poles above her head ; they were waiting to be rubbed. That is one of the things that an Eskimo hunter expects of his wife : she must keep his boots soft. In he comes from his latest chase after seals or walrus or bears : he is wet and tired and sleepy : soon he is sprawling on the platform bed, snoring great snores, while his wife is turning his wet boots inside out, to make them dry and supple for his next expedition. A good Eskimo housewife always takes a pride in her husband's boots. And Bob's wife reached for another boot, and went on with her kneading.

Close beside her, on an upturned tub, stood the seal-oil lamp. It was no more than a half-moon-shaped trough, hollowed from a soft stone, and half filled with thick brown seal-oil. A flat wick of moss leaned on the edge of the trough, dipping into the oil, and burning with a steady flame. Mrs. Bob seemed to be doing a little cookery, between whiles, over her primitive lamp. A battered meat-tin, a castaway, no doubt, from the Mission ship, hung by a string from one of the tent-poles, and twisted,

bubbling merrily, over the flame. From time to time she picked up a spike of bone which lay beside her, and poked the wick. This seemed to be all the attention the lamp needed. On the floor I saw a pot of seal's blubber, from which the oil was oozing. From this she could easily fill the lamp if it should burn low. I warrant she licks her fingers after the filling; and more than that, if she happens to fill the trough of the lamp too full I can well imagine her taking a few sips.

I could not do much more than look into Bob's tent; there was no room. The floor was strewn with relics of work and of meal-times; scraps of sealskin, fish-bones, chips of wood, bits of calico, either flung down as useless or left by the children when we interrupted their play. A fat, pale-faced baby was crawling about, exercising its sturdy limbs before returning to that queerest of queer cradles, the hood of its mother's smock. It found a bone, and squatted to gnaw it, cutting its teeth and acquiring a taste for the fishy flavour of seal meat at the same time. A family of pups romped and tumbled and snarled in their own corner; and all around the edge of the tent lay dogs' harness, spare clothing, sails for the boat, and pots of seal meat and fish heads.

And Bob was proud of his calico home.

The walls flapped in the breeze and strained against the poles.

"Does not the rain come in sometimes?" I asked.

Bob looked up at the hole in the top of the tent, where the cover was gathered round the bunch of poles. "Oh, yes," he said, "the rain sometimes comes in and trickles down the poles, but we get out of the way."

Admirable idea! Just think of the tent-dwellers on a rainy night! With real Eskimo good humour they arrange themselves between the poles, so that the raindrops can collect and trickle and drip beside them. What care they? They are dry, and that is something to be thankful for. And if sometimes they are wet, well, they do not mind so very much: like true Eskimos, they are content to take the rough and the smooth together.

The mention of Bob and his tent reminds me of the famous old heathen chief of that same village of Killinek. Tuglavi was his name, and I saw him many a time as I wandered about among the rocks and the tents; a weird, wild-looking old man, with a childish smile on his face. He used to follow me by hours at a time, muttering strangely to himself, and answering all my questions with only a broadening of his constant smile. Poor old

Tuglavi! I gave up trying to draw any information out of him after I had tried to take his portrait. I armed myself with a ship's biscuit, and went in search of Tuglavi. I found him near his iglo (hut), and offered him the biscuit.

He took it with a most delighted "Thank you": "Nakome-e-e-ek," he said, "nakomek."

"Adsiliorlagit-ai" (let me take your photograph).

"Sua?" (what?)

"Will you let me make a likeness of you?"

"Atsuk (I don't know). May I eat the biscuit?"

"Yes, presently; just stand over here."

"Nerrilangale" (let me eat it), and he turned his back on me.

"All right; just turn round and stand still a moment."

"Nerrilangale, ner-ri-langa-le-e-e-e"; and the poor old man broke down into sobs and ambled off home munching his precious biscuit. I was left gazing. I never caught him again. Once or twice I heard his shuffling step behind me, and a querulous voice said, "I want another biscuit," but not another word could I get out of Tuglavi. What I know about him I have

heard from the missionary. He is a famous old heathen chief. He has spent all his life camped among the rocks of the northern Labrador, and nobody knows how old he is. His people have come to the Mission station, bringing him with them; they have heard from other Eskimos of the preaching of the Word of God, and they have come to hear it; but Tuglavi cannot understand. His mind has failed: he is in his second childhood, and spends his time in aimless wanderings and in watching whatever there is to be seen.

I wish you could have seen those rough people of Killinek trooping to church on a Sunday. The missionary rang the bell that hung in the little turret above the church roof, and from every tent the people came. Many of them were heathen, and most of them were in their working clothes because they had no other—Sunday was a new idea to them. They sat in rows upon the benches in the church, with eager eyes fixed upon the missionary, and ears all alert to catch every word. And the singing: they knew no music but their own old heathen chantings, but they loved to hear the sound of the harmonium, and they were learning to sing the hymns we all know so well. But how very shy they

were! When the organ played loudly they sang out well; but when the player used the soft stops their voices ceased and the hymn nearly came to a standstill.

CHAPTER III

After the ship has gone—The smoke upon the sea—Ice—The village tailor—Cold weather—Fetching water—Our daily walk—The Labrador road.

MY first real feeling of loneliness, in the land which we call "Lonely Labrador," came to me on the day when the *Harmony* went away. In the small hours of the morning, when the sun was making ready to rise, the ship steamed out of the bay on her way to the next station, and I awoke that morning to a view of wide grey water that seemed strangely empty. The black hull and spidery rigging of the ship, that had been in sight of my window for the past few days, were gone; the place felt quiet; the village seemed suddenly deserted, for the Eskimos were away to their seal hunting, which they had left when they came to help at the unloading of the ship. But, happily, there was work to be done: all the things that the ship had brought were waiting to be unpacked and looked through. There was no time to be lonely with three barrels of potatoes to sort,

and we spent a good part of that day in putting the sound potatoes carefully away in straw, while the bruised ones took a more prominent place in a box in the kitchen to be eaten first. I was astonished when I looked through the kitchen window to see a number of tousle-headed little Eskimo boys and girls outside.

"Whatever do you want?" I asked them.

They all grinned sheepishly and said "Paungatannamik." It seemed that they had spied a box of apples on a truck coming our way, and so they were in hopes of a taste of the "fruit with the plump cheeks." They, poor mites, never see any fruit in their own land excepting the berries that grow on the brushwood that straggles among the stones; so they were to be forgiven for taking an interest in the wonderful "paungatannamik," and they devoured what I tossed through the window to them with great gusto, skin and core and pips complete.

We had to hurry on with the safe storing of the eggs and potatoes and apples in a room where they would not freeze, for the autumn weather had begun. As I took my daily walks upon the hills the cold struck dismal indeed. The land was all covered with hard snow, and the beach was crusted with a

coating of ice that crackled and boomed as the tides lifted it and left it. The sea had a queer haze hanging over it; it looked exactly as if the water were getting ready to boil, and the vapour was gently drifting with the wind. "Ah," said the people, "the sea will soon freeze; it is smoking already. That is always a sign that the ice will soon cover it."

At last, one morning towards the end of November, the sea was frozen: still grey ice took the place of the tossing waves and the rustling tides, and the silence of that grey sea was painful. It was a relief to hear a dog yelp, the whole world seemed so still.

All the morning the new ice was deserted; there were children playing near the edge, but they seemed afraid to venture far, and nobody took any notice of them. It was not until midday that the grown-ups began to take an interest in things, and then I saw an old man go hobbling over the beach with a stick. With proper Eskimo dignity and deliberation he inspected the ice and prodded it; then he walked upon it, at first feeling his way cautiously, but soon more boldly, and came back to say "Piovok" (it is good). He had done his duty, which was to test the new ice, for the people have great faith in their old men as judges of ice and weather. As soon

as the children heard "Piovok" they gave a scream of delight, and went racing over the bay—perhaps freed from the shadow of a thrashing that had hovered over them as long as the ice was dangerous—and spent the rest of the day romping and playing "tig" and "sleds" without a fear in the world, and as if there were no such thing as nine or ten fathoms of icy water under them. I took a very short and cautious walk on the ice that first day, but I cannot say that I enjoyed it—it was too nerve-racking by half. The surface had a queer elastic feel and gave way under my feet, like walking on cushions (such was the sensation), and swayed so horribly that I was glad to get off it. On the next day I tried a little skating on it, and thought to myself that nowhere in the world could there be such a place for skating as Labrador, with its hundreds of miles of tough grey ice and its sheltered channels and Norway-like scenery. But I was mistaken about the skating. No enterprising syndicate will ever exploit the North Atlantic Ocean as a skating rink, for on the third day the surface was slushy—the salt was working out; and on the day after that there was a snowstorm which covered the ice a couple of feet deep with hard waves and ridges of snow, and not

all the sweeping in the world could have brought the skating back again.

Now was the time for warm clothes, thought I; so I sent for the village tailor. In she came, a square-faced, brisk little Eskimo woman. There was no awe, no aloofness about her: she had made clothes for too many successive missionaries to feel anything but businesslike; so she stood me up, and measured me with her arms, and bolted out satisfied. "A bit taller than my husband, and not so fat"—that was her comment; and the outcome of it all was that after a few days she turned up again with a big bundle, and I found myself the possessor of a "Dicky" (blanket smock) and a complete suit of scalskins just like those that the Eskimos wear, and all for the outlay of a modest sum in return for the good woman's excellent needlework. Meanwhile I had got several women to work at making boots. Their method of measuring was much the same as Juliana the Tailor's: they came in, gazed at my feet, and went out! I was quite unable to see the sense in this, so I laboriously made paper patterns with the aid of the store-keeper and his stock of boots. I gave the patterns to the next woman who came to measure me for boots, and she accepted them with a smile—but the boots

she made from them were either too big or too small, and desperately ugly. I always got a proper fit when I let the women do their work in their own way, and Juliana explained it easily enough. "Some women," she said, "take up more in the sewing than others, and they are not used to patterns. Now I will make you some good boots." And without pattern or measure, or anything else beyond her bare word, away she trotted, and in a few days she brought me the best pair of boots I ever had.

So I got my clothes and my boots.

With the freezing of the sea there began the real Labrador cold; not the bleak, biting cold of autumn, when the wind blows from the east over the freezing sea, but the grim cold of winter. Oddly enough, it does not feel so very cold; it is a dry air, coming from the trackless desert of the interior of Labrador, bracing and keen, and lacking some of the sting of the sea wind; but night by night my minimum therometer sank lower, until, towards the end of January, it could go no further, and the indicator used to stick each night at minus forty. It is the little things one does not think of that show best the power of the winter cold.

On those cold mornings the bread was often

frozen, so that cutting it was like cutting stone, but by much hard work we managed to get slices, and these we thawed by toasting them over the stove, and so we got our breakfast.

Our sitting-room was rather stuffy one day, after a visit from a merry crowd of Eskimos, so I opened the window for fresh air. In a twinkling the pictures on the walls were covered with frost, and the plants on the side table—my wife's own pet little hobby—drooped their heads with one accord and died. I shut the double window with a slam, but it was too late; the plants were dead, and tears began to run down the faces of the pictures. That was my first lesson about King Frost in his own country!

There was a little pantry built next to our kitchen, a tiny room with a felt-padded door and a huge brick stove, and there we stored the potatoes and eggs and other things that must not freeze.

On the windy nights I used to make a chilly pilgrimage at one or two o'clock to fill up the stove and save the potatoes.

And ours was a warm house, built of boards and felt in alternate layers.

Early in December the Okak brook was frozen solid, and the people, instead of fetch-

ing water, came with hatchets and buckets and carried away lumps of broken ice to thaw. One little girl used to come every day with a sack on a little sled, and drag it home filled with the smaller bits that other people had pushed aside : it seemed a strange idea—the family's drinking water kept in a sack. As for ourselves, we were rather more squeamish than the Eskimos, who took no notice of the fact that the dogs were constantly trampling their chopping-place on the brook ; we sent a couple of men, with an iron tank on a sled and twenty dogs to pull it, across the bay to the big river. They reached water by jabbing a hole in the ice with a tôk—a sort of enormous chisel with a six-foot handle—and ladled it out with a tin mug. By February the ice on the river was eight feet thick, and they had to make a pit with steps up the side : one man stopped in the pit, and ladled the water into buckets, while the other man carried the buckets up the steps and emptied them into the tank. So we got our water. The men were able to bring about two hundred gallons at a load, and they made it their duty to keep the Mission house and hospital supplied all through the winter.

Every day we went for a walk on the frozen sea, unless a blizzard was blowing, and then

we had to stay at home. We dressed in mottled sealskins and fur caps—caps made of the skins of musk rats seemed to be the most fashionable—and so we braved the coldest days, and took our nice level walk upon the smooth hard sled track. If we got off the track we were over our ankles in soft snow, and so we kept to the slippery path that the Eskimos had worn, and looked forward to the time when we should be sure-footed like they are, instead of treading so gingerly for fear of falling down. We used to meet the sleds as we stumbled along: "Aha," the drivers used to say, "you will have proper legs some-day." As long as the wind was behind us we did not feel it, but as soon as we turned to face the wind we had to watch one another's nose. Ears were covered with flaps of fur-lined blanket tied beneath the chin, but noses and cheeks must go bare, and they used to ache and burn and tingle as the keen air nipped them. And because you cannot tell for yourself when your nose is frozen—it simply turns white, and the pain does not come until afterwards—we used to do our neighbour that kindness, and tell him when his nose was white, and maybe rub it for him with a handful of snow.

It seems queer to think of a country that

has no roads, but that is the way with northern Labrador. You may see a tiny path in the summer-time, winding away among the rocks or along the edge of the seashore, and if you follow it you are sure to come to somebody's tent: the people who live there have worn the path by their trampings to and fro between their tent and the store-house. But if you want to know the way to the next village, sixty miles away in the north, the Eskimo will scratch his head and look at you, and tell you—if it be summer-time—that he has a very good boat and will take you gladly if you will only give him time to get some food for the journey; if it be winter-time he will offer you the use of his sled and dogs, and will grin with delight at the thought of coming with you as your driver. For that is the only road that he knows anything about; the sea, tossing and stormy in the summer, frozen and still and covered with drifts of snow in the winter. I was almost saying that wheels were unknown to the Eskimos, for even the children of the missionaries are pushed about in perambulators on sled-runners, but I was forgetting. I know myself that there were two things with wheels in our village. One was the truck that the men used for dragging the heavy boxes along the

jetty to the store-house; the other was the Mission wheelbarrow. This you might meet some fine evening in the summer, pushed by an old Eskimo woman in sackcloth overalls; coming up from the garden to fetch a load of empty tins with which to cover the lettuce shoots, so as to keep them from the night frosts and the teeth of the busy mice. But all this is by the way. In spite of the truck and the wheelbarrow, and the narrow path that leads to the tents or to the missionary's garden, the sea remains the Great Labrador Road; and when the sea is frozen the Eskimo begins to mend his sled and to look out the harness for his dogs, and the boys are about with their toy dog-whips, teaching unwilling puppies to pull toy sleds.

CHAPTER IV

An Eskimo sled—My first sled journey—Sled dogs and their queer ways—The passenger—The end of the journey.

AS soon as the winter was fairly established I began to think of visiting some of the other stations by sled. With this idea in mind I consulted Jerry and Julius, the two men who made it their business to fetch our drinking water, and asked them about a sled. There was a respectable-looking sled about the premises, a year or two old, maybe, but good enough for us to take on our occasional trips about the bay, and I asked the men whether this would do for a trip to Hebron.

They were unanimous and very emphatic. "Piungitoârluk" (it is awfully bad), they said, and besought me to let them make me a good sled. "Very well," I told them, "you shall make me a good sled, and I will take you with me to Hebron." They were delighted, beaming and chuckling with glee, and could hardly be persuaded to finish filling the water tanks, so eager were they to be at work on the new sled. They were prepared to take

the whole thing in hand, from start to finish, and next morning were off to the woods at daybreak in search of a big, straight tree for the runners. I happened to tell the store-keeper about their objections to the old sled, and he, being a man well used to the ways of the Eskimos, smiled rather broadly. "The sled is not so bad," he said; "our postman carried the mails to Nain with it last week; but the postman made that sled, and your water-men did not. That makes a good deal of difference."

"Just so," I thought; "the Eskimos are like everybody else: every man likes his own handiwork the best!"

In the dark of the evening Jerry and Julius came home from the woods, helping the dogs to haul an enormous tree-stem. I was astonished that such a big tree was to be found in Labrador; but the men only smiled. They had been a good many miles that day, struggling through the soft snow of a sheltered valley that they knew, where the trees are shielded from the winds and have managed, in the course of centuries, to reach a useful size.

Next morning I found them sawing the tree into planks; Jerry, being the more learned man, was playing top-sawyer and guiding the

saw, while Julius stood underneath and knotted his great muscles with the power of his pulling. They had a workshop all ready close at hand; it consisted of two blocks of frozen snow set about six feet apart, and on these they laid the planks to be shaped and smoothed. I offered them the use of the carpenter's bench in the hospital, but they declined the offer with scorn. They were better used to the open-air work-bench, and seemed to use the tools quite well with their hands cased in thick sealskin gloves; at all events, the sled-making went on apace, and each time I went out I found them a little further on with it. All the men who had any time to spare were clustered round to watch, and they kept up a constant fire of remarks; but their chatter was always good-humoured, and the workmen seemed to get on the faster for it.

As the sled grew under their hands I found that they were making it sixteen feet long, and two and a half feet broad. It had twenty-six cross-pieces, and never a nail did they use. "Kappê," they said, "nails no good: plenty soon break: seal-hide ananâk" ("splendid"). They set the runners on the blocks, and bored holes for the binding: then stood them up a couple of feet apart and bound the cross-pieces to them, first the front and back ones,

then the middle one, and then the others to fill up the spaces. There was a gentle upward curve from back to front—to make the sled rise better to the snowdrifts, they said; and the runners were not set quite upright, but splayed slightly outwards—to keep the sled from slipping sideways; and every bit of the work was done with a neatness and exactness that the most skilled of carpenters might envy.

Jerry and Julius screwed the irons on to the runners, and sand-papered them till they shone; and then, exactly four days after the fetching of the tree, they dragged the sled up to the door of the hospital, and left it standing on the snow. "We dare not take it indoors," they said, "because it would warp."

Now that I had a sled I was ready to begin my journeys, and the word soon went round the village that I was making ready to go to Hebron, and that Julius and Jerry were to be the drivers.

Quite a number of the people made up their minds to see us go, and so it came about that our sled started at the head of a procession of fourteen. At the outset I knew nothing about it, for we set off in pitchy darkness at five o'clock in the morning. Julius called it a "fine morning," but as far as I was concerned it might have been midnight. I

THE UNWILLING PUPPY

The puppies receive their training at the hands of the Eskimo boys, who harness them and compel them to drag small sledges or blocks of ice. The puppies resent this treatment with piteous howls and a most aggravating stubbornness, but after a few days they fall into proper habits.

A SLEDGE PARTY

This shows the Eskimo method of harnessing the dogs, each on a separate trace. The dogs cross and recross incessantly as they run, until the traces are bunched into a great frozen mass; then the driver stops them and undoes the knot with his teeth.

could see nothing but some black and shadowy shapes moving to and fro in the dim glimmer of a lantern, and if it had not been for the spice of new excitement I could have wished myself back among the blankets. I was well padded with woollens and sealskins, but the night air nipped my nose a little, and I was glad to keep furtively rubbing with my sealskin glove.

Julius, like the experienced traveller that he was, went over the list of necessaries to make sure that we had got them all aboard, and then told me that he was ready to start. Immediately hands came thrusting forward from all parts of the darkness, and I realised that a huge crowd of people had silently collected to see us off, and to shake our hands and wish us "Aksunai." "Aksuse," I shouted, "Taimak (ready), Julius," and at the word away went Jerry along the track, and the dogs went racing after him. The line tightened with a jerk, and the sled started with a bound that nearly threw me off. Some good friend seized the lantern, and ran along with it to show the way among the boulders, but he had to be nimble to keep out of the way of the boisterous dogs.

Sled dogs, unless they are very tired, are always eager to be on the move; and ours

were in such a hurry that they tried to take short cuts of their own, leaping over great snowdrifts and frantically straining to climb huge hummocks of ice, and we might easily have lost some of them, or at least have had some broken harness, if it had not been for the willing help of our army of spectators. That dash between the hummocks to the sea ice was like a nightmare: the flickering lantern, darting hither and thither; the dim shapes of men and boys rushing about, chasing the unruly dogs; the yelping and shouting, with the pad-pad of footsteps and the grind of the runners—the whole scene comes back to me as I write. And all the while the people were sticking to the sled like flies, sitting, standing, kneeling, clinging, getting a ride somehow, all in a great good humour, and dropping off one by one when we reached the sea ice.

So I got my first send-off.

We were fairly on the way; and Julius struck a match and lit his pipe. In the flicker I got a glimpse of his face, all glittering with frost; his stubby beard was decorated with icicles, and his eyebrows were crusted with frozen snow; and when I passed a hand over my own face, I found that I was in the same plight. Julius was on the watch: he leaned

over to me and said, "Did you wash your face this morning?"

"No," said I, "the missionary told me not."

"Good," said Julius, "now your face will not freeze."

I shivered to think what would have happened to my face if I had washed it: as it was, my cheeks and chin ached with the cold, and I could not help raising a furtive hand from to time, just to make sure that I was not yet frozen.

By seven o'clock the sky was beginning to lighten, and we made our first halt at the famous ten-mile point Parkavik ("the meeting-place"). There the men disentangled the dogs, which by continual crossing over had plaited their traces together like the strings of a maypole; and I thought it well to drink some hot coffee. The coffee was not hot, although it was in a stone jar wrapped in a dogskin, but it was drinkable, which is more than I can say for it a few hours later, when it had assumed the form of ice-cream—not particularly tempting under the circumstances. The drivers did not want any: they had taken a good draught of water and a lump of frozen seal meat before starting, in addition to the breakfast of bread and meat and weak tea

that I had given them, so they were content to wait a while. During their tedious unravelling of the knotted harness the other sleds began to come up, and soon the whole fourteen were assembled at Parkavik. We waited until all were ready, for the very simple reason that if we had started no exertions could have kept the other teams still, and so it came about that the starting again was by way of being an imposing spectacle. My sled, with the drivers swelling with pride, headed the procession along the frozen fiord, and the others followed at proper intervals.

Not the least interesting part of this unique sight was the shadow: the sun was just up, and there was a marvellous string of spider-legged dogs and top-heavy sleds and weird, thin men sharply outlined on the pink snow.

It is only necessary to spend a day on a sled behind an ordinary team of Eskimo dogs, to get to know something of the ways of those queer brutes. There was no quietness about that run to Hebron, for all the drivers seemed to be shouting all the time. They seem to think that the dogs must be told constantly what they are to do, and so a driver's work is a constant repetition of such orders as "Ouk-ouk-ouk" (go to the right), "Ra-ra-ra" (to the left), or "Huit-huit-hu-eet" (go straight

on), and with some dogs it takes a great deal of shouting to get obedience.

The leading dog has a heavy responsibility on its shoulders: Geshe, my leader, had a trace about forty feet long, and needed to be very wide awake to catch her driver's voice at that distance. When I shouted to her she looked over her shoulder in a surprised sort of way, as if to say "Julius is in charge of this team: what are you shouting for?" but when Julius murmured "ouk" away she curved to the right with the whole team wheeling after her, until his cry of "huit" checked her. However deaf they may seem to be to "ouk" and "ra" and "huit," there is one word of command that the dogs will obey on the instant. If the driver says "Ah" they all lie down with one accord, a surprisingly sudden sort of thing to do. Another thing that they are ready for at all times is food: they seem willing to eat anything. Let the driver run ahead and pretend to sprinkle something on the snow: away tear the dogs as fast as they can scamper, straining at their traces so as to get there the sooner, and the men have a way of playing this little trick on them when they begin to tire.

One thing that we saw on nearly every journey, and that always set the dogs off at

a gallop, was the Arctic raven. That seems a solitary bird, for we nearly always saw one only. The great black bird used to stand on the snow, cocking its head this way and that, and perhaps stalking a step or two in an unutterably grave manner; and the dogs, as soon as they caught sight of it, were off with futile haste, each striving its utmost to get there first, and all held in fixed order by their traces. The leading dog had the best chance, but the raven had a wary old eye upon the danger: it waited until the dogs were within a few feet of it, and from the sled it looked as if it were caught, and then with leisurely flappings betook itself off to a fresh stand, to wait with unruffled calm for a repetition of the same performance.

I have no doubt that the raven would have been demolished, bones, feathers, and all, at a single gulp, if it had waited another second; but it never waited. My fur cap was swallowed whole one day, because it blew off my head in the track of a team of dogs belonging to a sled following close behind us; I have lost fur gloves, too, laying them down for a moment, and turning to find the gloves gone, and a great hulking dog licking his lips in a sly sort of way; and dogs are even ready to eat their own harness if they get the chance.

I verily believe they would have been willing to eat me, for once when I stumbled among the traces the whole team was on me with a pounce, and I have just a memory of a confused moment of snarling, fighting dogs and shouting, kicking drivers. A whip cracked, and the dogs spread in terror, while the drivers tried to calm them with deep-toned "Ah's"; and after that they told me never to go among the dogs unless I had the whip in my hand.

Our sled caravan got rather scattered as the day wore on; in fact, with some of the men who had only a few dogs it resolved itself into an earnest race to do the sixty miles in the one day. My drivers took no notice of their hurry. "Let them go," they said, "we are all right, we shall get there."

Just in front of us there was a curious erection in the shape of a house on runners, a sort of square tent, somewhere about the size of a Punch and Judy show only not so tall, built on a sled. This contained the driver's wife, and his idea was that she should sit tight and not feel the cold. The idea was, no doubt, an excellent one; but it had the disadvantage of boxing the lady up in the dark and depriving her of all view of the outside world, and consequently she was unable to take proper care of herself. We came to

a boulder-strewn beach, all ice covered, one of those places where the dogs try to go fast and are constantly getting their traces caught round points of ice. Off went the dogs with a rush, and the man after them to keep them straight. The sled had nobody to guide it; it ran up the side of a great hummock and over it turned. My view of the proceedings from twenty yards behind was of a sled upsetting and a heavily-padded and very surprised-looking Eskimo matron being somersaulted out of the top of her canvas house. She sat on the hard snow, gazing ruefully at her sled as it bumped along at a good ten miles an hour; but she managed to collect her wits sufficiently to pick herself up and make a flying leap on to my sled as it passed her. A mile further on we came on her husband sitting on a lump of ice and puffing unconcernedly at his pipe, while his dogs enjoyed a rest after their scamper. Hebron is admirably placed for a sensational arrival. The track turns sharply round a jutting point of land, and then runs for a straight mile and a half over the frozen harbour to the Mission station; consequently the keen-eyed people saw us as soon as we came round the point, and a good many of the men and boys started over the ice at a run to meet as, while the

DOGS FISHING

In winter the sledge dogs are fed three or four times a week, but in summer, on the principle of "no work, no food," they are left to forage for themselves. They may often be seen in the shallow water on the beach catching the slow sculpins or frog-fish.

rest of the population gathered on the slope in front of the village to watch.

From our point of view it was a relief to see the houses among the snow and rocks after our cold day's travelling; and to them it was the biggest excitement of the winter. You can imagine how they would shout when they first saw our sled; the big team of dogs and the three men on the sled would be enough to tell them at once that it was a European. Presently we got within sound of their shouting: "Kablunâk, Kablunâk" (European), they yelled, and their outbursts came booming over the ice in the still evening air. "Amalo, amalo" (another) they roared, as each sled came round the point; and by the time we reached them and looked back along the track the thirteenth sled was just in sight, with its trotting little mannikin driver and its bunch of little black dots of dogs, and the excitement was at fever pitch. There had never been anything like this before. Such a procession! It was a sight to remember; a long, dull streak across the clean, bright snow, alive with a series of crawling dots, the nearest easily distinguishable as men and dogs, shouting and yelping and racing towards us, the furthest mere black specks almost seeming to stand still. There was no mistake about the

welcome; each sled as it came up the slope was pounced upon by a laughing, gesticulating mob, who whisked it off, dogs and all, towards one or other of the Eskimo houses.

It is their way of inviting; seize the guest and take him along; and the boys ran in front of the dogs crying, "Hau-hau-hau," and leading them on until at the sound of "Ah" they drew up at the proper door.

CHAPTER V

Exciting news—Johannes—The race along the ice-edge—Johannes in a storm—Finding water—Johannes and the deer tracks—Hero's lift.

I MAGINE the excitement one cold winter's night when a sled came bumping over the frozen beach, with the tired dogs pattering in front of it, and we heard a story of a great storm roaring in from the East, and the sea ice all broken by the swell of the waves! But such was the news that the drivers told us, and there on the beach in the darkness the Eskimos came clustering round to hear. "The storm seemed to chase us," said the drivers, as they loosened the harness from the weary dogs, and unfastened the strappings of their sled load; "sometimes it nearly caught us, and the thick ice was cracking underneath our sled—but never mind, here we are—and we are very hungry!"

Somebody led the men away to give them a proper Eskimo supper, while I stood wondering at the power of a storm that could break that tough sea ice, for I knew that the ice

was fully six feet thick. And I was the more disturbed because my drivers and I were all ready to travel to Hebron in the morning with one of the missionaries; and how were we to go if the ice was broken! We had a long talk over it, and decided at the least to go in the morning and have a look at things. Then we went to bed.

Five o'clock came all too soon: I was hardly warm among the blankets before thumps resounded on the door, and I crawled out of bed to find the drivers dressed in their sealskins, the dogs in harness, and the sled standing ready for its load.

It was a bleak and dispiriting business, this pulling on of cold clothes and boots by the lamplight; but there was work ahead, and we were eager to be at it; and by the time I was dressed the sled was ready, and a crowd of people were keeping the dogs from running away.

It was anything but a pleasant morning, if morning it could be called. It was pitchy black, with never a star and no glimmer of moonshine; and only the fact that the dogs could smell their way along the beaten track made it possible for us to start at all.

For two hours the team trotted on through the darkness, and then the sky began to grow

light in the East, and we saw the wide stretch of white ice beside us, and the dogs with their spidery shadows and a black and awful sea in front of us.

Then it was, as we stood talking and planning and trying to find a way, with the dark sea before us and the ice heaving and groaning under our feet, that we heard the quick pattering of the feet of dogs in the gloom behind us, and we turned to greet a short light sled with an active little driver, and we heard a cheery voice say "Aksuse." It was Johannes. What was he doing? "Oh," said Johannes, "I heard that you were going to Hebron, so I thought that I would come with you. I hear they have plenty of walruses at Hebron, and I want some walrus skin for drags for my sled. I think they will sell me some."

What a day to choose to go a-shopping!

I wonder if there was more at the back of that little man's mind. He joined our conference, and listened with nods to all that the drivers had to say. They wanted to turn back. "There is no road," they said, "the ice is all broken around the headland across the bay. Let us turn homewards." "A-a-atsuk," said Johannes, with a slow shaking of his head; "I know a track over the headland; let me

see whether we can get to it." He walked along the ice at the foot of the rocks, now standing for a moment, now running a few steps, now clinging to the stones, and we watched him in silence. He came back presently and called to us to follow; and then began the race along the fringe of ice at the foot of the cliffs. On the left the wall of rock rose steeply; on the right the black water churned and tumbled and ground the floating pans of ice together; the ice beneath rocked and heaved with the force of the waves, and here and there the water came swilling over. In front was a racing sled, with Johannes sitting on it and yelling "Hu-it (go on), hu-it, hu-it" to his dogs; and our teams were following at safe intervals, galloping as fast as their feet would carry them. "Sit tight, sit tight," said the drivers; and there we sat, bowling along over the heaving ice. Sometimes one of the men pushed out a leg to guide the sled round a bend or to check it where it seemed likely to slip sideways: they said nothing; just sat there and chewed at their pipes, and left the dogs to follow the voice that shouted unceasingly in front. At the place where the guide led us on to the headland the ice was broken away from the rock, and was rising and falling with the swell.

One moment it came groaning up to the level of the land; the next it sank away and left a leap of several feet. The dogs went scrambling over, glad to get on to something firm; but the drivers held the sled back until the ice began to rise, and then with a yell they started the dogs again and bumped across the crack just as it came up level. A second too soon or too late would have meant smashing the front of the sled to splinters; and as we drew on to the land I looked back and saw the ice dipping again behind us, and my companion's dogs coming on to take their turn.

Johannes looked over his shoulder to see that we were safe, and then started on foot, ahead of his dogs, to show the track. It seemed a long way over the headland, uphill and down, and always through soft snow; and all the morning that little man trotted on, knee-deep in snow, lifting his feet high to run the more easily, and keeping the same steady pace, hour after hour, with the dogs hard at his heels. Sometimes he got on faster than the dogs, especially where the snow was deep and they had practically to swim because they could not get a foothold, and then they had much ado to catch him up again.

So through the day we toiled on, with Johannes ever leading, and in the dark of the

night time we came to Hebron, with the trim little figure in his sealskins trotting tirelessly on; and such was my first meeting with Johannes.

I got to know him better later on, for after that run to Hebron I took him as driver on all my journeys, and the better I knew the little man the more I liked him. He was always cheerful, which is a great thing, especially when your lunch sandwiches are frozen like stone, and make your teeth ache, or when your toes are cold and you dare not jump off and run to warm them, because if you did you would sink in the soft snow up to your neck. But those were the times when Johannes was more cheerful than usual; and I think that he was really at his best when a storm was blowing.

On one of our journeys we had come through a biting wind upon the mountain passes, and were happy to be on the sea ice again and in the cold winter sunshine. But as the afternoon wore on and the sun sank the wind began to follow us again. The air had a queer threatening chill in it; little eddies of snow came whirling along the floor, whisking round us and poking up our sleeves and down our necks, and the dogs dropped their tails and huddled together and whined as they ran.

Within half an hour we were in the thick of the drift, and I found that running before a storm is no more pleasant than facing it. Johannes, who was sitting by me, pulled his sealskin dicky over him, and shouted "Anan-aulungitok-ai" (this is not nice), and I shouted my "Ahaila" back at him with some little apprehension; I knew that it is something out of the ordinary that makes an Eskimo driver put on sealskins over his blanket and calico, but the men always had a word of explanation for me. "All right," shouted Johannes, "very cold now: get to Nain soon," and then he turned his back to the wind, and sat drumming on the runners with his feet to let the dogs think that the driver had his eye on them. As a matter of fact the dogs were out of sight; I could hear no sound of them above the roaring of the wind, and there was nothing to be seen but the main hauling trace quivering away into the drift and the white floor slipping past.

As long as daylight lasted I could understand how the drivers found the way, because all the flying snow seemed to be whipped up from the floor, and in the occasional lulls of the wind we caught sight of the cliffs and mountains of the land. In fact, when the sled rose up to cross a neck of land we gradually

drew above the drift, and could look back and see the sea ice covered with a rushing cloud of powdery snow that seemed like driven smoke. But when night fell, and the storm roared louder, I began to wonder how we should fare. The dogs were tiring, and would not turn ; they wanted the storm behind them ; and when all landmarks were swallowed up in the drift and the darkness, and there was nothing for me to see but an occasional glimpse of the stars or the dull glow of the drivers' pipes as they stuffed the tobacco down with their thumbs, little Johannes pulled off his sealskin dicky—and I knew that he was going to run ahead. "Sit on the sled, or you will get lost," he yelled, and trotted into the dark. It seemed hours before I saw him again, and then I suddenly found him beside me. "Are you cold?" he shouted, and slipped off the sled again to join Julius where he was wrestling, with hands and teeth, with the frozen and tangled traces. I hardly knew that the sled had stopped, but presently Johannes ran off again, and there was a mighty jerk as the dogs got up to follow him. The next stop was dramatic. Miles and miles we seemed to have run, when suddenly the sled went grinding over pebbles, and I heard the great voice of Julius, the other driver,

shouting "Ah." I ran forward, and found that we had stopped close to a huge boulder about the size of a cottage. Johannes appeared from somewhere in the darkness ahead, and said, with a jerk of his thumb towards the boulder, "We ought to be on the other side of that." "Quite so," answered Julius, and swung the nose of the sled around. "Ha-ha-ha," piped Johannes, and the dogs jumped to their feet and went after him round the boulder. I could see very little from my seat at the back of the sled; even Julius, a few feet in front of me, was no more than a silent shape, a sort of petrified man; though I knew that he was very wide awake by the sudden lurches and heaves and kicks that he gave when the sled needed turning one way or the other. His eyes were open, too, in spite of the darkness, for now and again he leaped from the sled and hauled it sharply round, to guide the runners over some awkward crack in the ice. Apart from these little outbursts of energy he seemed content to sit still and chew his pipe, with his back to the wind and his feet dangling close to the snow. If I had asked him whether his toes were cold he would have raised his eyebrows in astonishment, and would have said "Cold? Not I, I am an Eskimo!" As for myself, my toes were so

cold that I should have liked to run, but that was a thing I could not do because of the darkness and the unevenness of the snow. No doubt Johannes was running quite comfortably, but then, you see, Johannes was an Eskimo, born and bred in Labrador, and he had the fine high-stepping gait that serves the Eskimos so well in rough and soft snow. But I had to sit still, as Johannes had told me: so, in the hope of getting warm, the next time the sled stopped I got the polar bear's skin that was lashed over the load, and wrapped myself in that for warmth. The little man from ahead had his usual word of encouragement for me: "Nain in one hour," he said; "no more stops." "However will you find Nain?" I asked him. He waited until the next lull in the wind, and pointed upwards. "Do you see that bright star?" he said; "that star is right over Nain: the people say that if it were to fall it would fall on the village: we go under that star"—and away he went, and I felt the jerk as the sled started after him. Sure enough, in one hour we raced up the slope to the village of Nain, and the dogs roused the people out of their houses with their yelping.

Sometimes on our journeys Johannes would begin what seemed to me the queerest of capers

and antics. One day he suddenly drew a great snow-knife from among the lashings of the sled—a knife with a blade a yard or so in length—and ran at the top of his speed towards a little valley that sloped down from the hill-side close at hand. Julius took no notice, and the dogs went trotting on. Johannes ran hither and thither, and began to plunge his knife into the snow. He waved it towards us, and Julius stopped the dogs with his gruff "Ah": then he asked me to find him a drinking cup. Johannes, it seemed, had felt thirsty, and had been finding water. I ran to where the little man was digging in the snow: he plunged the blade in again for me to see, and drew it out wet! In a few minutes he was ladling mugfuls of water out of the hole, the coldest water that I have ever tasted.

One day we were crossing the pass over the Kiglapeit mountains when Johannes suddenly jumped off the sled, rushed up a hillock of snow, and fell down on his hands and knees. The sled trailed quietly on, leaving him crawling about on the snow-bank. After a short time spent at this queer game he jumped to his feet and came running after us. He laughed when he saw the surprised look upon my face; but there was a twinkle of excitement in his eyes as he told me, "There are the

footprints of deer on that bank of snow. Between fifteen and twenty of them have passed towards the East this morning."

That night we slept in a hut a few miles from the foot of the pass, where an Eskimo was spending the winter to be nearer to the hunting places. As I lay in my sealskin sleeping-bag, trying to find a soft spot on the hard floor, I heard the Eskimos talking about those deer tracks; and when we got up in the morning the owner of the hut was making ready to go and see them for himself. Before we left we watched him drive his dog-team away towards the mountains, turning every now and again to wave his hand to us. I think that he had a special smile for me that morning, because I had given him some handfuls of hard biscuits, which he said would do splendidly for food for his trip. "Biscuits never freeze," said he, and he put them in a little bag and tied them to his sled, popping a piece in his mouth meanwhile He munched his biscuit very happily while he put the harness on his dogs; and I thought of my frozen bread and butter of the day before, for I knew that the biscuit was almost as hard. But that hunter had Eskimo teeth, which are made for chewing hard things. He drove away, and we watched him out

of sight. A few days later we passed that way again, and I asked him how he had fared on his deer hunt. "I found the tracks," he said, "and I followed them until I saw the deer, and there were seventeen of them—and I got a fine fat one, and here is deer meat that my wife is cooking for your supper."

We had a boy with us on that trip home. He had come by himself as far as the hut at the foot of the pass, and now he wanted "a lift over the mountains." Might he come with my sled? By all means, said I. This youth had the unusual name of Heronimus, and how he got it I do not know. I do not think that he knew much about it himself, for he said his name was Hero; and as the drivers and the hunting people all called him Hero, Hero he shall be. In the morning there was a powdery snow upon the ice, and when we were ready to start there seemed to be no Hero. The drivers took no notice of his absence: they shouted "Aksunai" to the people, and then with a roar of "huit" to the quarrelling dogs they set the sled a-going. But no Hero, in spite of his having asked so eagerly the night before for a lift. I asked Johannes, "Where is the boy, Hero?" "Running in front," said Johannes, and he pointed to the soft snow through which we

were moving. And there I saw footprints, the footprints of Hero somewhere away in front, guiding the dogs towards the pass.

Later in the morning we came upon Hero sitting on a lump of ice. He seemed very well pleased to take a share of our lunch, and trotted alongside chewing the frozen bread as easily and contentedly as the hunter with the hard biscuit. As for myself, I put the bread inside my coat to thaw—for I wanted no more toothache, because I think that a freezing day in Labrador and a lonely trail over the mountain-tops make toothache a more miserable companion than ever. But Hero had good Eskimo teeth: he seemed quite happy to be chewing frozen things. When we stopped at midday to disentangle the dogs, he undid the knot in the main trace with his teeth, because it was too stiff and hard for fingers; then he trotted away again, and was lost to sight in the distance ahead. We followed his footsteps all the afternoon, until they turned away from the usual track in a direction that Johannes did not like. "Hero has gone wrong," said he; and with much shouting and waving of the whip, he got the dogs away from the footprints and drove them in the way he wanted. At the further side of a rocky island we came upon Hero again. He jumped on the sled with

a laugh, and said, "You should have followed me: snow much firmer the way I came." We sat in a row upon the sled and ate more of our frozen bread and meat: then Hero trotted away again.

When we reached our resting place, a tiny hut half buried in the snow, he was waiting for us. He had the snow cleared away from the door and the fire burning; and he was busy breaking branches to make a bed for the night.

He slept on his share of the bed of branches, slept like a top; he was up to boil the kettle in the morning; he packed away the breakfast things while the drivers put the dogs into harness, and away he went again. And so we came home again to Okak; Hero first, trotting, trotting, trotting.

And as the sled went grinding up the beach to the houses, Hero came shyly to me, with a frank and pleasant smile upon his ruddy, boyish face—to thank me for the lift!

CHAPTER VI

Building a snow-house—Feeding the dogs—Adventures with snow-houses—Evening prayers—Our hard beds—A wolf among the dogs.

WE had not often the good fortune to reach a nice warm house and a comfortable fireside for our night's rest; many times on our journeys evening came upon us while we were still miles from the nearest dwelling, and then I was thankful to do as the Eskimos have always been happy to do—spend the night in a snow-house. I got quite used to seeing Johannes work himself up to snow-house pitch. When the afternoon light began to grow dull, he pulled out one of the big snow knives that he kept under the lashings of the sled. A fearsome-looking knife it was, with a bone handle and a blade a yard long. Brandishing this, he trotted from side to side, prodding here and jabbing there. He was "finding snow."

Soon Julius stopped the sled, and they held a consultation.

Then the building began. It was generally

on a gently sloping hillside, for there the snow hardens the best; and Julius told me that a number of places are famous among the Eskimos for good hard building snow, and travellers do their best to reach one of these spots for their camping.

When once the place was chosen, my drivers were soon at work. Each man armed himself with his huge snow knife, and between them they marked a circle on the snow. Then Johannes retired to the middle and began to dig. He first made a wedge-shaped hole to give himself a start; and then from the sides of the hole he carved great slabs of the frozen snow. I judged them to be about six or eight inches thick, two or three feet long, and eighteen inches high, and they were nearly as heavy as stone. Johannes just tumbled them out of his hole as fast as he could cut them, and as the hole grew I saw that the slabs were all slightly curved. Julius seized each slab as it toppled out, and carried it gingerly to the edge of the circle. He set the slabs on edge, side by side, and chipped them a little from the top so that they leaned inwards. He pared away the first few with his knife so that the lowest ring, when finished, formed the beginning of a spiral. He followed the spiral up, propping each slab against its neighbour, and

chipping its edge so that it leaned well inward. Meanwhile Johannes got nearer and nearer the wall with his digging, and his work got harder and harder, for instead of tumbling the slabs out he had to pick them up and hand them to Julius over the leaning wall. I thought the wall looked frail and unsafe, but Julius seemed to think otherwise, for I have often seen him crawl upon it and lean over to see how Johannes was getting on inside. As a matter of fact, his weight only pressed the slabs together a bit more firmly; and I got so used to it that I have sat placidly in a snow house while he crawled over the top.

At last the spiral was finished, all but the "keystone." Julius sprawled on the side of the house, while Johannes's hands pushed a big slab through the opening that still remained at the top. Julius laid it over the hole, and chipped the edges with his knife until it gently dropped into place, and the building was ready. A scraping and trampling noise inside was the next thing; that was Johannes smoothing the floor. Meanwhile Julius was filling all the crevices with handfuls of snow. "To keep the wind out," he said; "boy's work, this"; from which I gathered that the Eskimo boy learns to build by filling the crevices with snow as his father fits the

slabs together. "Yes," said Julius, "and boy has to follow quickly, too; if he gets behind, he is no good. Soon learn to be quick. Now, my boy——" and Julius was off into an anecdote of his boy's quickness.

Soon Johannes was ready to come out. I always knew when he was ready, because he used to light his pipe; and a weird and rather pretty sight it was, to see the glow through the snow walls, with all the joints and crevices marked out because the snow was softer there and let the light through.

It was usually dark by the time the house was ready.

Johannes's sword poked out suddenly and slashed a doorway in the wall, and the man himself crawled out and made straight for the sled. Then the dogs began to sit up. They knew that feeding time was near. They were usually quiet while the building was in progress, but the finishing of the work seemed to wake them up. They began to whine and prowl about, and Julius often had to show them the whip to keep them in order. They would collect into a bunch and sit on their haunches, wistfully eyeing the preparations for their supper, and uttering a queer whistling sound. Julius needed only to trail the whip lash behind him as he walked, and the dogs

nearest to it would slink off to the other side of the group. Meanwhile Johannes was chopping a frozen seal into fragments. He spread the pieces on the snow, and called "Taimak" (ready).

There was a pricking of ears and a lolling of tongues: Julius quietly moved to one side, and with a mighty pounce the dogs were on top of their food. Yelping, snapping, snarling, gulping, the wise ones bolted the frozen meat, bones and all, as fast as they could pick it up. Some showed a little more refinement, but the dog that picked up a chunk and wandered aside to eat it at leisure got only a poor share. It was evident that the only way to get enough was to be quick; and it was marvellous how soon that frozen seal was demolished. It was the work of a few seconds. One of the drivers always stood by to see fair play, while the other carried the load off the sled and piled it inside the snow house.

I used to sit in my sleeping-bag to have my supper, and the house was so cold that I had to wear thick woollen gloves—a new fashion, you may well think, for the supper table; but then, you see, we had only a thin wall of snow between us and the cold night air, and we dared not have a fire for fear of melting the house and bringing the whole of it tumbling

about our ears in a very wet and chilly heap. Such a mishap with a snow house I never had ; and the credit, I think, must be given to those two faithful Eskimos, for my drivers had the name of being two of the very finest builders on the whole coast. But I met a missionary in Labrador who had sat in a snow house for two whole days while a blizzard roared outside. Neither he nor his drivers dared to go outside, for nobody could stand against the terrible wind, and there was nothing to hear but the roar of it and nothing to see but the whirling snow. So there they sat, the three of them, while the blizzard blew. And gradually the wind ate away the wall of snow, making it thinner and thinner, until all of a sudden, with a roar and a swoop, the snow house fell to pieces and was scattered in a million fragments by the storm. The travellers scraped for themselves a hole in the snow, and there they lay, perishing with the cold and half buried by the drift, until happily the wind grew less, and they were able to gather their dogs together out of the snow and so go on with their journey. Sometimes on a windy day my drivers would say to me, "Blizzard to-morrow, maybe," and they would set to work and build a wall of snow around the windy side of our snow house, and the blizzard

would spend its force upon that. And sometimes on the warm spring nights I have heard the water drip, drip, drip from the walls and the roof, and when the daylight came there has been a patch as thin as a window pane through which the morning sunbeams came dancing, and I have thought that, but a little longer, and our snow house would have tumbled in upon us and thawed about our heads. But the protecting hand of God has been over us; and in all my journeyings, and in all the queer huts of turf and stones buried under piles of snow, and in all the strange shelters of boughs and branches, and in all the frail little beehive houses of snow in which I have spent my nights, far from the homes of men and amid all the wild scenery and wilder weather of lonely Labrador—in all these times of peril and hardship no mishap has overtaken either myself or my faithful Eskimo drivers or my patient plodding team of dogs. Night by night, as we sat in our cold and solitary shelter, with supper eaten and the snow-door closed, and the well-fed dogs seeking their rest on the snow outside, we have taken the Bible from the box where our food was stored, and we have read our evening portion and said our evening prayer together. And as we have laid us to sleep in

JULIUS AND A SNOW HOUSE

The Eskimo always builds his snow hut on a spiral plan, making the wall lean well inwards as it curves upwards, and fits a "keystone" of frozen snow into the hole at the top. When finished it is snug and windproof, though always very cold.

the darkness we have known the presence of God, that Great Father who keeps his children, of whatever people and language they be.

Once when a caravan of sleds was crossing the mountains my drivers made a big snow house, and we called the people together and sang hymns. It must have been a strange sight, if there had been anyone to see it—the rounded snow hut, with the crevices in the walls all lighted with the candlelight within; and a strange sound it must have been in those mountain solitudes, the sound of lusty voices singing hymns. But there were no listeners save, perhaps, the wandering wolves; none to see but the owls, if they were about, or the great buzzards that sometimes cried out upon the rocky crags as we passed them by.

Snow houses were never very comfortable. For one thing, a snow house is cold, never much better than freezing; and for another thing, sled drivers always misjudged my length, at least until they got used to me. They persisted in building snow houses to fit Eskimos, and I had usually several inches of spare leg to tuck away into some cramped and awkward position. Julius and Johannes got to know my measure, so to say, and used to build me a house in which I could at least

stretch comfortably if I lay across the middle. But cold and cramped though our snow houses might be, we ate our evening meal with an appetite, for hunger is a splendid sauce ; and we were glad to lie down and rest.

The drivers used to make the beds by spreading all the harness on the floor and covering it with a bearskin. Then across the middle of the house they laid my sleeping-bag, and I crawled in. Last of all they made a little hole in the top of the house for ventilation and blocked up the door, and we were ready for sleep. I was never very cold in a snow house, in spite of the chilly surroundings, for a threefold sleeping-bag like mine, sealskin, deerskin, and blanket, was as snug as the warmest of beds. But, oh, the floor ! Dogs' harness may be all very well as a bed ; the Eskimos used to lie on it without any extra covering, and snore the snores of the weary ; but I used to roll from side to side, vainly searching for a soft spot, and feeling, I suppose, very much as the poor princess must have done in the fairy story, when she had to sleep with a pea under the mattress.

On one of those wakeful nights I heard a terrible scuffling among the dogs outside. There were constant snarlings and howls, mixed with a most weird trampling noise.

At last the turmoil came too near for my peace of mind : scraping, shuffling feet padded over the snow house, bringing down showers of snow on to my face. I got rather alarmed.

I woke Johannes—and he took some waking, too.

He rubbed his eyes, and then as the noise dawned on his ears, " Kingmiârluit " (those awful dogs), he said, and shoved his way through the door. There was a sharp yelp and a brisk scuttering, and then silence again. Johannes crawled back, and plastered up the doorway with handfuls of snow.

" A wolf among the dogs," he laconically told me ; " too much fight, all the time. Fine night : start soon," and he tumbled into his slumbers again.

CHAPTER VII

Running downhill—A breakdown on the mountain—The beautiful plank—John—The scraping noises—Evening in John's house—The little cloud—The hand of God—Johannes in the darkness.

THERE are plenty of thrills on a sled journey, and coasting downhill is one of them. As soon as we began to descend, the drivers moved to the front of the sled, and sat one on each side. Their main concern seemed to be to keep the sled from unning away. They dug their heels into the snow, and tugged and shoved to keep the track; and all the while they were yelling and screaming at the dogs, which raced on in front in a frightened effort to get out of the way.

As the pace grew faster the drivers put on the brakes.

On my very first journey I had noticed two heavy loops of walrus hide, tucked under the lashings at the front of the sled, and had wondered about them. I soon knew what they were. Looped over the front of the sled

runners they make powerful drags. One is enough to check the pace on any ordinary hill, while with two the sled will stop on slopes that look quite alarming. It is only seldom that the drivers really let the sled go, because they dare not risk a smash over an ice hummock or a wave of frozen snow.

The stronger man of the two drivers always has the lion's share of the actual guiding of the sled; while the smaller man is always ready to run forward to the dogs. Big Julius and little Johannes worked together like two parts of a machine. Johannes was always on the watch. "Kollek, Kollek," he would shout, "keep to the track: keep to the track, you rascal. Ra-ra-ra-ra, go round that rock!" Kollek was a foolish dog; his place was the outside one in the team, and there he would be! He did not seem to like running with the others; and not all the shouting in the world would bring him into line if he had made up his doggy mind to straggle. And round that rock he would not go. Perhaps he was in a brown study: perhaps he was sulky: straight on he went, outside dog right enough, but the wrong side of the rock. Now came the trouble. Away rushed Johannes to lift the trace over; but before he could reach it Kollek was whining and whistling with terror as the

weight of the sled drew it tight and dragged him backwards. Poor dog! he planted his feet as firmly as he could on the frozen snow, and did his best to withstand the strain; but the sled went calmly on, and Kollek slithered frantically backwards. In a twinkling he was plump up against the rock, and then he could go no further.

There was a twang as of a giant fiddle-string when the trace broke, and Kollek was free. The trace trailed limply behind, while the dog scurried away to his place in the team.

There he trotted, with shoulders forward and nose down, looking as if he were pulling as hard as the best dog in the country, but, sly old rascal, looking back every now and again to see if Johannes was after him with the whip.

There seems always to be wind in the mountains, and on one of those mornings, after a cold night in a snow house, the wind was much too strong for comfort, though the men assured me that it was quite safe to travel. But the mountain stream, which is the winter road, was clear of snow, and the dogs could not keep their feet upon it. Each puff of wind sent them skidding about, howling with terror, and the sure-footed little Johannes was kept

hard at work lifting the traces over rocks and points of ice while the heavy sled came bowling after him.

Things were even worse with the sled. Julius and I were clinging to it, trying to keep its nose to the front, but the gusts swirled it hither and thither and flung us from side to side like corks. At last we came to a frozen waterfall, and the dogs took to the bank. Julius tugged and strained and put forth all his strength and cunning, but the ice was like glass and the sled would not turn; the runners could get no grip upon the slippery surface, and we were helpless in front of the wind.

After a short few moments of anxious clinging we came up against a boulder, and over we went with a crash. I remember quite well that as I was flung from my hold on the sled and went sliding down the frozen river I heard Johannes's voice from the bank shouting "Ah—ah—ah" to make the dogs lie down.

I picked myself up and made my precarious way to the sled by clinging to the boulders—it was impossible to walk in the ordinary way because of the wind whistling down stream—and found the drivers holding a palaver over a smashed runner. They displayed no con-

sternation at our plight, and had very little to say; at times like that the Eskimo is a man of action, and it seemed quite natural that with a short grunt of explanation little Johannes pulled an axe from among the load firmly lashed to the upturned sled and trotted off on an errand of his own.

Meanwhile, Julius was looking for his gun, which he had tucked along the floor of my travelling box, and I was amazed to see him load it and start firing at the broken runner. He was using great bullets that he had most likely intended for shooting deer, and the effect of each shot was to bore a good-sized hole in the wood. He placed eight of them at intervals along the runner, some near the top and some near the bottom, and then coolly polished out his gun with a wad of tow and made it fast on the sled again. By this time Johannes was in sight on the river-bank, carrying a long, thin tree over his shoulder; and Julius set to work to find a spare length of seal-hide trace somewhere among his belongings. The two Eskimos chopped the tree to the proper length, and flattened it a little on one side; then they threaded the line through the shot holes and bound the tree to the broken runner.

"Taimak" (that will do), they said, and

moved away to get the dogs ready. In a few minutes they were lighting their pipes for another start, and we bumped and slid and twisted down the river as if nothing had happened. Julius kept the sound runner towards the boulders, so that the patched one had none of the bumps, but when once we were off the slippery ice of the river we went jolting over the ridges and racing down the slopes in quite an ordinary way, and the travelling was none the slower for the tree-trunk splice on our broken runner.

On the morning after our arrival in the village of Nain, while the dogs were sleeping off their tiredness, waking every now and again to lick their frosted toes and wonder when the next feeding time would come, those two busy drivers were on the look out for a new runner for the sled.

They had the good fortune to meet with a man who was the proud owner of a beautiful plank of the fine tough Labrador wood that never warps if you leave it out in the snow; and over several pipes of black tobacco in that good man's hut Julius and Johannes had made their bargain. Before noon they came along to see me: they had the beautiful plank on their shoulders, and they dumped it carefully on the snow outside my window; then

they ushered in the owner of the plank and told me the price of it. I paid the man right gladly, and out he went, chuckling and grinning, with his mind filled with visions of all the things he would buy when next the trading store was open. "Beautiful plank," said Johannes; and out the two of them went to borrow tools from the cooper. Then followed a couple of days of sled-mending. They sawed the plank to the shape of the old runner; they bored holes in it in the proper places, using an awl this time instead of bullets from a gun; they bound it in place with thongs, and left my sled standing on the snow looking as good as new, while they carried the old broken runner and its tree-trunk patch home to their lodgings and chopped them up for firewood.

But they shook their heads over my sled on the journey home: "No good," they said, "one runner new and one runner old," and so my travelling sled, with its brand-new runner made of that beautiful plank, had to be cast aside when we got home, and ended its days in the less poetical tasks of fetching water and clearing away the snow. But we got home, in spite of those runners that did not agree; and I have no doubt that Julius and Johannes spent many an hour telling

their cronies all about the broken runner and the beautiful plank.

Soon I saw them at their task again, fetching a tree, sawing two fine new runners out of the heart of it, shaping and smoothing and boring and binding, until they had a new sled ready for me and were looking forward to the next journey.

There was one man to whom those journeys must have been a Godsend, and that was my friend John. He lived in a wooden house on the shore of a big bay twenty miles from the nearest village, and he managed, by dint of sheer hard work, to catch enough seals and codfish to keep himself and his household in clothes and food. And once or twice in every winter I used to turn my sled towards the mouth of John's bay—and you should have seen the dogs prick up their ears when they came upon sled tracks in the snow, and smelt the smell of a house, when, poor brutes, they thought that they had another twenty miles to run before they dared think of shelter and rest and food. But so it was: once or twice in every winter we raced up the slope to John's house and shook him by the hand, and heard the cheery sound of his wife's voice saying, "Come in, come in and warm yourselves: we saw you coming across the bay,

and we guessed you would come to us." And as she helped to pull the snow-covered seal-skins from off our shoulders she would be saying, "We have some partridges for supper; and look, Julius, look Johannes, there are sealmeat steaks all there, and I will fry them if you like." "Attê," big Julius would say, with a merry twinkle in his kind brown eyes, "just do so; and let there be many steaks, for we are hungry—eh, Johannes?"

At this Johannes used to laugh, for they were hungry indeed: like all true Eskimos they ate very little while on the run—just a frozen sandwich, maybe, with a tin cup of half-frozen tea or a mouthful of icy water, water so icy that it almost makes my teeth ache to think of it. They ate but little as we toiled along; but when the day was done they were ready for a vast supper. So John's wife fried the seal-meat steaks and took the partridges out of the pot, and set the table with butter and home-made bread; and we fell to with a will. I shall always remember those suppers, because of the scraping noises on the roof.

Scrape, scrape, scrape, went the noises on the roof, without any ceasing, sometimes quietly and softly, sometimes vigorously, as though someone were trying to dig through

the rafters above our heads. The drivers looked at one another and laughed, and laughed all the more when they saw my puzzled face.

But John, with his quiet smile, took me by the arm when supper was done, and led me out into the bright and frosty night.

"Look on the roof," he said; and I looked, and the roof was sprinkled with sleeping dogs. There was a great snowdrift piled against the back wall, heaped up by the wind, and up this drift the dogs had crawled to get near the warmth of the chimney. The dog that lay curled up beside the chimney-pipe had not much peace; he had had a hard fight for his place, and now he was sleeping with a wary eye half open for possible disturbers of his warmth. And as we sat around John's stove, and the night grew colder and bedtime came near, we could hear the scrambling and the scraping of doggy claws upon the slippery roof, as the sleepy sled-dogs over our heads scuffled and squabbled for that snug spot by the chimney. On those evenings, when the house was shut for the night and the washing-up was done, John's wife and the girls would join us where we sat; and then John brought the Bible from the little bookshelf in the corner, a well-thumbed strongly bound book

in large clear print, and we read and sang and prayed together. The words were strange to my two Eskimo drivers, for we read in English, but they knew it was The Book, and they listened with quiet reverence; they knew that we and they were just children of the great Father in Heaven; and as we sang and as we prayed, they joined in with their gruff voices and their queer long words that seemed so full of "k's" and throaty noises.

So we realised the presence of Christ in the wilds of Lonely Labrador.

Once, I know, we made an unexpected call at John's house; and this is how it came about. We had started on a clear morning, hoping to get to Hebron, a run of over sixty miles, in the one day. By midday we reached the steep little neck of land that stands halfway, and as we toiled up the slope we were talking of how quickly we had come and how we would be in Hebron before dark. But when we stopped on the summit, and looked down upon the wide stretch of ice before us, we saw a cloud lying low upon the ice, and drifting quickly towards us from the north. "We cannot go, we cannot go," said the drivers: "it is the Northern Storm."

"To John's house," they said, "it is the

only safety"; and they shouted to the dogs and set them racing down the hill.

And all the time there was running in my mind the words from the Bible, "A little cloud, no greater than a man's hand." It seemed a very little thing, that small grey bank of cloud, but the drivers knew it; and when I looked again, after the breathless race down the steep slope to the ice, I saw a great grey wall come tearing along to meet us. In a few minutes it was upon us, a biting, freezing tempest of icy snow.

I sat with my back to the wind, for I dared not face it; and every time I turned to look I saw the same sight; a whirling wall of snow all around us, a sight to turn one dizzy, with a line stretching away to where the dogs were pulling, lost to sight in the drift, and two brave frosted figures, clinging to the sled and running with heads down, guiding our way in spite of the storm. There was no landmark to guide them, everything was blotted out; no voice or sound could make itself heard above the awful roar.

How the men found their way I do not know, but suddenly we went bumping up a bank and left the storm behind us. In another minute we heard the howling of dogs, and when the sled went grinding over a patch of wood-

ehippings I knew that a house must be near. Sure enough the dogs stopped on the sheltered side of a wooden house nearly buried in snow, and one of the men shouted to me, "Go in—John's house." I thumped the thick of the snow off my shoulders and made for the poreh, whieh was, of eourse, full of dogs; but when I "shooed" them out of the way I was astonished to find that they were all in their harness. I pulled the seal-hide thong that lifted the lateh, and went into the house. There sat John, clad in all his travelling furs, with a dejeeted head bowed upon his hands. He looked up in an apathetie sort of way, but his look ehanged in an instant to one of utter eonsternation. Then he jumped to his feet and shouted for his daughter, and the two of them stared, and wrung my hand, and asked how ever I had managed to get there. My side of the story was soon told, and then eame John's: one of his household had just met with an aceident, and he had harnessed his team to go to Hebron, the nearest Mission station, for help, when the storm came up and drove him indoors. Between us we managed to set things to rights, and all the evening John sat ruminating over the strange happenings of the day; and he put my own thoughts into words when he said,

"The Hand of God is very near us on the Labrador."

I cannot tell how the Eskimos find their way in darkness and storms: I think that it must be by a special gift, the sense of direction, such as the bees and the birds possess.

I tried to get an explanation of it from little Johannes, while I was crossing a wide bay with him on a pitch dark night.

We had no track to guide us, and the powdery snow that was falling made the night darker than ever. We could not see anything. Johannes sat on the front of the sled and talked to the dogs. He told them tales of birds and seals and foxes, and sometimes of houses and supper, and the dogs were running all the better for the sound of his voice. "Johannes," I said, "how are you finding the way?"

Johannes waved his hand towards the front. "That is the way," he said. "Yes," said I, "but how do you know: have you a landmark to guide you?" "You shall see the landmark presently, when we come to it," said Johannes; and he went on with his chirping and chattering to the dogs.

On and on we went, two hours of steady trotting through the darkness; and suddenly a great black shape loomed up alongside.

Johannes turned to me and pointed. "There," said he, "there is the landmark: that is the rock by the side of which we find the track." But still I do not know how Johannes found that rock!

CHAPTER VIII

A summons home—The sleepy dogs—Singing us off—Into the storm—A risky trick—Our camp in the river-bed—Lost on the mountain—Julius to the rescue—A house.

I SUPPOSE that most people have wished at one time or another that it was possible to be in two places at once.

I know that in the life of a mission doctor on the coast of Labrador, where places are so far apart and travelling is so slow, there often come times when urgent calls must be obeyed, and when one might well wish for wings and the power of flitting to and fro among the villages. Once upon a time my drivers and I had scarcely reached the village of Nain when there came a messenger, a solitary little man on a short light sled, to call us back again to Okak. He must have followed hard upon our tracks, though he had started a couple of days later than we: his dogs were worn out, and he was weary with the constant push, push, push to catch us up.

Home we must go; that was his message.

I called big Julius, and put the matter to him.

"How soon ean we start?" said I. Julius held up his hands in consternation. "Start," he said, "we cannot start; the dogs have been fed!"

I knew what that meant. Sled dogs, when they are resting after a journey, are fed only onee every two days; and you may imagine the appetite with which they devour their food when it eomes. The driver flings the food on the snow: there are a few moments of snarling, pouneing, gulping and seuffling: then a few minutes of eating the very snow, beeause it may have the flavour of food about it: dinner is finished, and the dogs eurl themselves up to sleep. And so my dogs had been fed; they were fast asleep, and no amount of shouting or calling or even whipping would make them fit to run until they had slept their sleep out. "It is impossible," said Julius, "we eannot start with those dogs."

"Never mind," said I, "if you eannot wake them up, then borrow dogs or exchange with the men; go round the village and get a team together." Off went Julius without a word, and soon he was baek to tell me, with rather a wry smile on his faee, that he had got a team of dogs, enough for our journey—and a motley lot they looked. There were a few of our own dogs, the ones that could be

roused, I suppose, very sleepy and slow; but the most of them were village dogs, lean and furtive.

But those village dogs were working dogs, used to hauling loads of seals and firewood; and so we made ready for the journey. Then came another trouble: my other driver marched in.

"Are we going to start? Look, bad storm coming," and he pointed towards the north. "Never mind, Kristian, we must go." "Ahaila," said Kristian, and went to help Julius harness the dogs.

News soon spread, and the whole village turned out to see the start. As I walked down to take my place on the sled the old Eskimo schoolmaster laid his hand on my sleeve. "Don't go," he said, "you will all be lost. Don't go."

His concern was real, so I called my drivers. "What do you say?" I asked them. "Are you willing to go?"

"Illâle" (of course), they said. "Ready," said I, "go ahead." The dogs slowly raised themselves on their legs, and whined as they trotted along the bumpy path towards the sea ice; and the heavy wrack of the northern storm came bowling along to meet us. "Aksuse," shouted the people, "be strong,"

and we waved our hands and shouted back. Then they began to sing.

There is a lump in my throat and a mist in my eyes even now, when I think of that scene : just a crowd of rough Eskimos, people whose grandfathers had been heathen and wild, singing a hymn of God-speed as we set out on our dangerous errand.

"Takkotigêlârminiptingnut
Gûde illagilisetôk"

they sang, and the charmingly balanced harmony came fainter and ever fainter as the wind began to sigh about us and the snow to beat on our faces. "God be with you till we meet again"—and we settled confidently to our task.

That was the quietest day I have ever spent on a dog-sled. There was none of the chatter and banter to which we were used ; there was work for us all to do, and we did it seriously, and all the time the drivers chewed pensively at their battered tobacco pipes and said nothing.

It was slow going until the dogs had got used to working together, but towards evening the pace improved and we made our usual six or seven miles an hour in spite of the storm. As often as the dogs got tangled up Julius

straightened their traces without stopping the sled. I had heard tell of this feat, and so was very much interested when he set about it; but I thought it a very risky piece of acrobatic work. He pulled the team back close to the sled, so as to get the frozen knot in the hauling line within reach of his teeth. The dogs, of course, thought they were going to be thrashed, and tugged and galloped most frantically, so that the man had hard work to hold them.

We should have been in a pretty plight if they had got away, for they would have turned in their tracks and gone back to Nain, and we should have been left to walk. However, Julius tied the line to one leg and chewed the knot loose; then he slipped the traces off one by one and looped them over his other leg, so that all through the performance it was a case of seventeen dogs harnessed to Julius's legs, while he sat tight and made the sled come along with him. I was glad when the risky business was over.

All day long I sat with my back to the wind, while the sled jolted on, and I wondered however the drivers were finding the way. Each time that I turned my head to look I was met by the same blinding, driving snow; and it was not until evening that I got any inkling of our whereabouts.

Then the way led us uphill, and I knew that we had left the sea ice and were on the land. There followed a cold and dreary hour of bumping and jolting over rocks and up sudden little cliffs, while the men were constantly out of sight in the storm; then the driver's voice said "Ah," and the dogs stopped. "Stopped" is hardly expressive enough: at the word their legs seemed to collapse under them, and they curled themselves up where they dropped.

Happily we had stopped close to a straggling bush, so I was able to cut some twigs for a fire without any risk of losing myself. I lit my fire in a niche of the rock, and put on a kettleful of snow, and then stamped up and down to get a little warmth into me. On my way to the snow house I trod on what looked like a mound of snow in the river bed. The mound got up and yelped, and I saw that I was among the dogs. They were peacefully blanketed by the snow, content to remain buried until the drivers woke them up in the morning. The one I had trodden on settled down again as soon as he found that the disturbance was neither the signal for work nor the beginning of a fight, and in a few moments he was, to all intents and purposes, a snow-covered stone as before.

I picked my way among the other doggy mounds that lay here and there in the frozen river-bed, and so got my precious kettle safely to the snow house that the men were just finishing. Of all the snow houses that I have ever had for shelter, that one was the smallest. I had the middle, because I was the tallest, and even then I had to draw my knees up to lie down at all. The drivers packed themselves in one on each side of me, and there we lay. They, the sturdy fellows, snored lustily, although they had no bed but the dogs' harness and no covering but the clothes they wore ; but I, well I had snow in my sleeping-bag ! Imagine yourself, cold and tired, pushing your feet into the depths of a fine thick bag of padded sealskin, and meeting with an icy mass of half-frozen snow !

Ugh ! the thought of it makes me shiver !

I crawled down head first and scraped the most of the snow out ; but the bag was damp and clammy, and it took me half the night to thaw it to a comfortable warmth.

I fell asleep before morning, and woke suddenly to find one of the drivers pushing a mug of hot tea into my hands, and I blessed the kindness that had left me to sleep while they boiled the kettle and made ready for the journey.

A mug of hot tea is a wonderful help at a time like that, even though the water be smoky and clouded with grits; and we used to fold our hands and "say grace" for those rough meals with real thankfulness.

The weather was worse than ever, but the men were quite cheerful about it, although they must have known that we had a dangerous task before us. To-day we must cross the summit of the Kiglapeit pass, with a blinding snowstorm beating in our faces. But the Eskimos were in their element, and at times like those I never knew them to be faint-hearted. Off we went into the storm, and the sled runners groaned as they ploughed heavily through the soft snow. For ten or twelve miles the way was plain, for our track followed the course of a frozen torrent, between high banks, and the dogs had no difficulty in picking their way; but when we got on to the lake at the top of the pass the trouble began. The wind was blowing in a circle, and gave us no guidance at all; and to me it seemed that we were on an open plain of snow, enclosed by whirling walls of white. I could see nothing but the snow slipping past us as the sled drove steadily on. Julius sat with set face, continually crying "Hu-it,

hu-it " (go straight on, go straight on) to the dogs, hoping by this means to hit the track again on the other side of the lake. An hour slipped by and still there was no land, so we stopped the sled for a conference. " Ajornarmat " (it cannot be helped), said the drivers ; " it is useless to look for landmarks, for we are still on the lake. We must just drive on and hope." We seemed to be travelling fast, for the dogs were frisky and full of energy ; but it was a very blindfold sort of work, and I think it was a relief to us all to feel the grind of rock under the runners, and to have the sensation of going uphill again. We were across the lake, though where, and how far from our course, we could not tell. The nose of the sled pointed up and up, and then suddenly dipped : we were over the ridge on the summit of the Kiglapeit mountains, and the men were slipping the heavy walrus-hide drags over the nose of each runner in readiness for the slide downhill. The sled began to gather way, and I took a good grip of the lashings and braced myself to withstand the jolts, for to fall off meant certain disaster. Suddenly a cloud of powdery snow hissed up as the drags bit the road under the runners, and I was flung violently backwards against my travelling box. As I fell I had a glimpse

of the drivers leaning heavily back, with heels dug into the snow, straining their utmost to stop the sled.

The whining, frightened dogs were all about us.

Julius turned the sled bodily upside down, to prevent the dogs from running away with it, and then, as I came forward to speak to him, he held up a warning hand. His quiet "Ajorkok" (it cannot be done) was enough: I knew that we had missed the channel that runs between the shoulders of the summit, and were on the very brink of a slope that runs steeper and ever steeper to end in a sheer precipice, down which we might have fallen headlong. There was a tight feeling in my throat as I drew back from the giddy depth of whirling snowflakes and joined the drivers where they stood by the sled. It had been a narrow escape.

"We must go back," said Julius.

"No," said Kristian, "a little further to the left we can get safely down: it is too slow to go back."

"But no," said Julius.

"But yes," said Kristian.

It looked like the beginning of a quarrel: they appealed to me. "Go back," I said.

Kristian heaved the sled around, and Julius

trotted over the crest of the slope again, calling " Ha, ha, ha " to the dogs.

For a long time I saw no more of him ; and more than once Kristian said, " We ought to have gone to the left : too slow, this." On we went through the blinding snow : even the dogs were out of sight ; I could see the long trace slipping over the snow, with now and again a glimpse of the tangled, knotted mass of lines that led away to the dogs.

The lines were always tight, and I knew by that that Julius was somewhere ahead, and that the dogs were following him.

Suddenly he appeared, looking a real snow man. " Here is the track," he announced, and flung himself heavily on to the sled and began to charge his pipe. Now the dogs ran yelping on, and the sled raced after them down the slope. The drags were on, but the way was safe, for we had recognised the passage between two rocks which marked the beginning of the descent to the sea ice, and we drove on with perfect confidence. We reached the ice late in the afternoon, and found the wind blowing straight from the north. This was a help, for it gave us our course across the bay ; but the dogs refused to face it, and kept edging away to one side or the other, so that once more we had to rely on the willing

Julius. On he trotted, right in the teeth of the wind, with the dogs scampering close on his heels. When for a while we skirted the land he came back to the sled for a rest and a smoke, but in the open he dived into the storm again, and led the dogs on with tales of seals and foxes and a house to rest in. At last his words came true. "Iglo, iglo" (a house, a house), he yelled, and stood to let the dogs race by. As he jumped on to the sled he said, "A house; sleep here," and the sled drew up with a bump and a rattle at the door of one of the craziest shacks that it has been my lot to see. The door was off its hinges, if it ever had any, and the doorway was choked with snow; but we dug our way in with hands and snow knives. There was a rusty iron stove without a pipe, but we filled it with damp twigs and lit it with a stump of candle, and sat in the horrible reek. We were warm, and we could dry our clothes, even if we were choked. At first it was too awful for me, and even the Eskimos grinned at it; but when we got the fire nice and hot, and turned the back of the stove to the doorway, the house began to feel comfortable; and we hung our wet boots from the rafters and sat down to our toasted but rather frost-bitten bread and mutton with quite a feeling of luxury.

We were warm; we had a roof over our heads; and, best of all, the mountains were crossed and we had only twenty more miles to go to reach our homes in the village of Okak.

CHAPTER IX

Springtime—Travelling by boat—Daniel—Among the ice pans—Daniel as cook—A night among the ice—The little whirlpool—Mutton in the kettle—Singing the night away—Benjie.

AS the long winter passes and the warm spring sun begins to melt the ice on the sea and soften the snow on the hillsides, there comes the time when the Eskimos begin to dig their boats out of the snowdrifts where they have lain through all the cold and stormy days, and make them ready for the water.

You may hear a shuffling of feet in the passage, and a shaggy head peers around the corner of your door, and a voice asks you whether you have an old saucepan to give away, or a butter tin that you do not want, for here is a man who wants to boil some tar to stop the leaky places in his boat.

Day by day the tides come oozing up the beach under the ice ; big cracks show in the broad sheet that covers the sea, until at last the sea ice is broken and floating in pieces, and some bright morning the west wind

drives it all away to the open ocean, there to wash to and fro and slowly melt away. Then the Eskimos help one another to push their boats down the beach to the water, and the women are all a-bustle to get things ready for the summer's fishing. The sleds that have been so busily going to and fro all the winter and spring are turned upside down and put upon the housetops; the harness is hung up among the rafters of the roof, where the hungry dogs cannot reach it; the dogs themselves are idle. Perhaps the dogs are happier during the working days of winter, because they are better fed: in summer, when they have no work to do, they must take care of themselves, and you may actually see them a-fishing on the beach, perching on the stones and pouncing on the frog-fish that flap lazily about in the pools. The Eskimos go to and fro on their sleds as long as the ice will bear them; but there comes a time when the ice is too broken and too dangerous even for an Eskimo, and then the people shrug their shoulders and say that travelling is "Ajorkok" (cannot be done). But even in such times it may happen that a boat comes threading between the pieces of the broken ice; and so it was that four men came toiling into Okak Bay one bright July morning. They pushed

their boat along with poles, and after a great struggle they reached the jetty and told their story. Their missionary was ill: help was needed: and so they had pushed their way in a frail boat along a hundred miles of sea all strewn with ice, and were ready to start back again the next morning.

"But very hard work," they said, as they clambered out of the boat and followed the folk who had seized their baggage; "very hard work—please find us another man, so that we can be five, and rest by turns from the rowing"; and away they trotted to a good breakfast and a good sleep.

I looked about the village for an extra boatman, and among the few who had not gone away to the seal hunting I thought of Daniel. I knew Daniel as a good and handy workman, so I sent for him. Soon he came shyly in—a short, square man with a broad back and muscular limbs, and, above all, a willing, good-natured face. He was not dressed like an Eskimo; he had on his summer costume of an old tattered jersey, left him, no doubt, by some fisherman from Newfoundland; and there he stood in the doorway of my room ready, as he always was, for any work that came his way.

"Daniel," said I, "are you ready to start

for Nain at six o'clock to-morrow morning ?" "Yes," said Daniel, without a moment's hesitation, and no more perturbed than if I had asked him to do one of the everyday things at which he is so handy. "Yes," he repeated, and turned and went home.

When I walked down the jetty in the morning the four Nain men were at their places : the tallest, chosen captain by his mates, was in the bows with a pole, scrutinising the ice field ; the others were leaning over their oars, smoking and chatting and exchanging gossip with the people who had gathered to see us off. Stroke oar was vacant ; but even as I looked about for Daniel, the man himself came lurching along hugging a big stone.

"Aksuse," he said, and dropped the stone gently into the boat. The others took no notice, beyond the usual "Ah," and Daniel ambled off again. For fully five minutes he went on with his task of collecting stones, and at last I asked him, "Are these for ballast ?" Daniel grinned and twinkled. "Me cook," he said, and settled to his oar. "Taimak, hai ?" said the captain. "Taimak," I answered from my place by the rudder, and we were off.

I really think that the first few miles out of Okak were the slowest that I have ever travelled, not even excepting soft-snow-travelling on a

sled trip. The pace was a trifle faster than standing still, and that is about the best that I can say for it.

Happily the day was calm, or we could never have moved at all. The method of getting along was simple enough in a way. The oarsmen stood facing the bows, so as to see what was ahead; sometimes they dipped their oars in the water, but more often there was not enough water within reach, and they had to shove the boat along by pushing with their oars on the ice. The captain stood up with his pole, carefully keeping the boat from bumping the ice, and separating the pans to make a passage, and all the while he never ceased from muttering orders to the rowers. The boat's nose was never pointing in one direction for more than a minute or two; north, south, east, and west we steered, and once we were in the ridiculous position of having to wriggle a hundred yards back towards Okak in our search for a way. Things went quietly enough as long as we were in the shelter of the bay, but outside we met the tide, and found ourselves in a field of ice that was constantly on the move. The captain leaned on his pole, darting this way and that, and yelling his orders at the top of his voice, and the willing boatmen toiled

and shoved. At one moment the boat was leaping through a clear channel; at the next, a big ice pan would catch it and fling it round with a shudder, while the men strove to hold it off with their oars and perspired with the exertion. It was an exciting time, but we got through without much damage; and I felt as much relieved as the Eskimos when we came to a stretch of open water and left the churning ice behind us.

About midday a light breeze sprang up, and the men heaved a great sigh of relief as they drew in their oars. In a minute they had spread the sails, and the captain came jumping over the thwarts and took the tiller.

Two of the oarsmen made their way to the deep bows, and sat there chatting and filling their pipes; another just fell asleep where he was, sprawling over his oar; while Daniel looked at me with a twinkle, and said again, "Me cook."

He seemed to enjoy my mystification, for his next move was to pull a great butcher-knife from a sheath hanging at his belt, and carefully sharpen it on the palm of his hand. This was his hunting knife, his dinner knife, the knife he used for cutting his tobacco and for all other purposes possible to imagine, and I wondered what strange new use he had in

his mind for the well-worn tool. When it was sharp enough, he chose a nice piece of firewood from a pile at his feet and began to whittle shavings, looking up with his usual grin to repeat his joke—" Me cook, eh ? "

When the pile of shavings had grown large enough to earn a contemplative nod of satisfaction, he betook himself to his heap of stones. He cleared a space on the wet floor of the boat, and laid a big flat stone upon it, then he built a wall of smaller stones around it, and filled up the hollow with shavings and wood. Then he knelt down and struck a match, and carefully lit his fire, poking and puffing at it to make it burn. In a few minutes a trail of smoke was streaming away into the air behind us, and Daniel came to the triumphant climax of his joke.

" Pujolik, pujolik " (a steamer), he yelled.

The two men chattering in the bows jumped up with a start ; the steersman awoke from his apathy and gazed about him ; even the man sprawling across the oar roused himself and raised his sleepy eyes ; and Daniel roared with glee at the success of his little plot. " Pujolik," he shouted, pointing to the smoke, and we all entered into the spirit of the thing and laughed boisterously.

Soon the sleepy head dropped again ; the

steerman's eyes once more took on their dreamy stare; the men in the bows scraped and filled their pipes, and returned to their chatting; and Daniel turned to his fire with a chuckle, and said, "Now, me cook." He seemed to have everything at hand, for he produced a kettle and a keg of water from apparently nowhere with the unconcern of a professional conjuror, and then he foraged in the provision-box for the tin of tea. Oh, Daniel! where did you learn to make tea? I am thankful that the Eskimos like their tea weak, for Daniel's method was to put a pinch of tea in the kettle, fill it up with cold water, and set it on the fire. In a quarter of an hour or so Daniel was doling the boiling tea into tin mugs, and we were stirring in the molasses to suit our fancy. I smiled as I drank my tea and watched Daniel bending, with grave face, over the smouldering fire in his heap of stones; but I think we were all of us thankful for the cheery presence of the man, and for the comfort of his cookery.

Towards evening we once more entered the ice field, and steered slowly between the heavy pans as they edged to and fro with the gentle swell; and at dusk we made our anchor fast among the stones of an islet at the foot of Cape Kiglapeit, and with half our journey

done we sat upon the rocks around the bubbling tea kettle and sang our evening hymn. The men cleared a space on the floor of the boat, and spread the sail for an awning, and I laid me down in my sealskin sleeping-bag and listened to the lapping of the water. Before morning the lapping had ceased : the water had frozen round the boat, even on a July night. The Eskimos are a hardy folk. I found my five boatmen sleeping on a patch of moss among the rocks, snoring contentedly in the cold air without so much as a blanket among them ; and they woke in the morning fresh and bright, and sang and laughed as they pushed the boat among the ice. Daniel skipped from one part of the boat to another, always seeming to be in the very thick of the work ; and once he seized a rope and ran over the ice to haul us through a narrow passage, while the others lolled and filled their pipes again, and made remarks about Daniel being a " Pujolik, ai " (steamer again). Daniel came to a sudden stop, and shouted, " Jump out, all of you," and in a moment we were on the ice dragging the boat across, high and dry, to plump it into the water again on the other side of the floe. At midday we anchored against a small iceberg, and Daniel clambered upon it to fill his kettle at a pool that the sun

THE SPRING FLITTING

Jakobus and his family leaving Okak to pitch their tents for the spring seal-fishing at Cut-throat Island. Bedding, boxes, and stove are on the floor of the sledge, with the tent lashed over them, and on the top is the kajak frame awaiting a new skin.

was making in a hollow; then we poled on again while the tea was warming over the fire-place of stones. There was a short rest for the men during the afternoon, when the sails were up and we beat to and fro along a sheltered run; but soon the captain said something that brought forth a chorus of "Aha's," and caused a general turning of heads. There was a peculiar turbulence about the water in front of us, and there was something familiar about the hills around; there on the right was the beginning of the sled-pass over Kiglapeit, and we were entering on the piece of water that never freezes. Soon we were tumbling and twisting among the currents of a sort of miniature whirlpool, and the oarsmen were straining and shouting in time while the captain steadied the boat as well as he could with the long sculling-oar at the stern. I had seen the black spot of water on the white sheet of ice only a month or two before, and many a time as we passed the place on our winter journeys I had wondered why Julius led the dogs close under the rock. All the explanation he had given me was "Sikko-karungnaipok-tava" (never frozen); but now I understood how the power of the battling currents gives the ice no chance to set, even in the bitter cold of January.

The men were exhausted by the time the currents were bubbling half a mile behind us, and nodded and grinned with appreciation when I suggested supper. I decided on hot meat ; but as we had only one cooking utensil the tea and meat would have to take turns, and Daniel chuckled as he helped me to scrape the mutton out of the tin into his useful kettle. We anchored at the mouth of a little brook that was trickling through the melting snow, and within a few minutes we were eating our mutton out of our teacups while the kettle sat on the fire filled with its usual cold water and tea-leaves. We rinsed our cups at the rivulet, and drank the hot tea thankfully ; then I took out the Bible, and the men clustered round me for the evening reading. I sat afterwards gazing at the lowering sky, while the captain spread the sail over my sleeping-place in the stern, and the others lay on the moss and smoked. The captain came to me. " Storm to-morrow," he said ; " you go to sleep now ; we row all night " ; and without another word he called to the oarsmen and hauled the anchor up from the water. Good-hearted fellows ; how I admired their pluck. Rather than risk delay they would toil all night at the oars, because the wind was coming, and to-morrow it might be impossible to travel among the ice-pans.

As I lay in the dark under the sail I could hear the rhythmic creaking of the boards under the feet of the captain, as he stood at my head rolling his heavy sculling-oar, and I could hear the steady thump of the oars against the thole-pins, and the swish and drip of the water; and, lulled by the measured sounds and rocked by the gentle roll, I fell asleep. I woke in the dark hour before the dawning, and heard the sound of singing; it was Daniel's voice, crooning a favourite hymn. Presently the others took up the song and sang, so softly, so as not to wake me up, but keeping time to the plashing of their oars. Hymn after hymn they sang to pass the night away.

Soon after sunrise we reached the open water that narrows towards Nain, and then up went the sail and in came the oars, and with the water hissing past us and the ropes groaning and the mast creaking under the strain of the wind we raced into Nain Harbour. The people were waiting on the jetty. They shouldered the bags and boxes; Daniel and the other boatmen stowed away the sails and oars and anchored the boat, and then went home to sleep, smiling and good humoured to the end.

The Eskimos are wonderful boatmen, they seem to love the sea with all its dangers, and

yet so few of them can swim. The boys are always in the boats in the summer-time, or paddling among the stones; and yet if they fall into deep water they are lost. One day, while they were at their play upon the jetty, a little fellow fell into the water.

The others pluckily pulled him out, and brought him, limp and half choked, to the hospital. As soon as he was fit to be out of doors again he showed his gratitude by electing himself general hospital handy-man. It was impossible to talk to him, for he was quite deaf, but he was always waiting about looking for some sign that meant work to be done. To jerk your thumbs over your shoulders meant oars to Benjie, and away he would scamper to the boat, grinning with delight; and by the time I got to the water's edge he was in his place with the two oars in his baby hands, ready to burst into the loudest of sobs if I would not let him row.

CHAPTER X

A skin canoe—The harpoon—A seal hunt—A night in a greenhouse—Hauling the seal net.

IF you happen to be along the village on an autumn morning, you may see an Eskimo come out of his hut and drag his skin canoe from its resting-place on the roof of the porch. He balances it upon his head or on his shoulder, and trots away down the beach to the sea; then he gently lowers the canoe to the water, steps quickly in, and paddles away.

It all looked so very easy that I thought that I should like to try, so I asked little Johannes to lend me his canoe and his paddle. Johannes smiled. "Yes," he said, "I will bring my canoe; and I think that it would be very good for you to try in the shallow pool there, along the beach, for there you cannot be drowned."

And so in the evening, when the tide began to fall, and the big pool was left on the beach in front of the houses, Johannes came sweeping along with graceful strokes, and drew his canoe up by the spot where I was standing. "Now," he said, "you may begin"; and I

began to clamber in. But oh, the treacherous, wobblesome thing: it danced upon the water like a cork, and careered off sideways as soon as I set foot upon it, and rolled from side to side as though it would upset, while I clung to it with one hand and to Johannes with the other, and he himself could hardly stand upon his feet for laughing. But at last I managed to get in: Johannes held the crazy thing while I crawled along the deck and seated myself in the hole in the middle with its padded cushion of dogskin. Then things were better; for I found myself seated on the floor of the canoe, well below the water line, and I felt fairly safe. I took Johannes's paddle in both hands, and off I went, down the long pool in front of the houses. Then the uproarious glee! Men came running from their homes to see the fun; they howled with delight, and sat upon their doorsteps to laugh the louder. "Hai," they shouted, "who are you?—and where do you come from?—have you paddled here from Nain, or is it Hebron where you live?" with fresh yells of laughter as I dipped my paddle and the nose of the canoe went dodging from side to side. They knew me well enough, for had I not been binding up their wounds and attending to their aches and pains for many a day; but it tickled their fancy to see me in an Eskimo

canoe, and so I was an Eskimo for a time. "Not much plenty seals out here," I shouted back to them in the queer broken English that they use when they talk to the men on the fishing schooners. "I am coming home again"; and round I managed to turn the thing and paddled back to Johannes, feeling every minute more at home in the canoe, and feeling, too, how wonderfully safe the frail-looking thing was. That was a beginning, and I know more about canoes since then; but that first trial in a skin canoe made me wonder all the more at the skill of the men who go off to the seal hunt, and sit for hours in rough and freezing seas, balancing themselves with their long paddle, and ready in an instant to fling their great harpoon or point their gun at the head of some seal that happens to come within reach.

The harpoon is a wonderful weapon: it has a jointed head made of a walrus tusk, with a barbed end that fits over it and is held on by a line looped to a knob in the handle. The spare length of the line lies coiled on the top of the canoe, and its end is fastened to a blown-up sealskin that serves as a float. Over his harpoon the hunter spends long hours of patient scraping and rubbing and boring and fitting; the socketed joint is as neat and firm as clever hands can make it; and the result is that the Eskimo can trust his harpoon

to do what he wants of it. The hunter sits balanced in his dancing kayak, and flings his harpoon at the fat neck of the seal as it pops up for a breath of air.

Down goes the seal with a rush, striving to shake itself free from the something that is stinging its neck. The hunter, calm and cool, balanced in his dancing kayak, reaches for the blown-up skin that lies behind him, and drops it on the waves. The harpoon bends where the head is jointed: the point of the tusk slips away from the socket in the barbed tip; the line swiftly unloops itself from the knob on the shaft; away dives the seal, intent on freedom, with the barb secure in its plump flesh, while the long line drags after and the blown-up skin bobs upon the water as a float; and when the hunter has picked up the shaft of his spear he paddles towards the float and waits for the seal to come up again. There is no great risk of the barb slipping—why, strong fellows like Julius and Paulus can throw the harpoon with such terrific force that the barb sometimes goes clean through the seal. The rest is easy; the seal comes to the surface, dead, maybe, or dazed and faint, and an easy target for the killing dart. Then the hunter's pulses throb. "Puijesimavok" (he has caught a seal), and he seizes it with a long hook with notches in

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SEAL-HUNTERS

They go out in the autumn, always on the alert to fling the harpoon that lies ready at their right hand. The seal is brought home on the deck of the kajak, and the arrival is always followed by a feast of raw sealmeat for all.

its handle, and lifts it by resting the notches one after the other on the edge of his frail kayak until he can slide the slippery carcase on to the skin deck in front of him. Then he arranges the harpoon and float in their places, and paddles homewards.

The harpoon that big Julius gave me hangs upon my wall, but the float is somewhere on the broad Atlantic—probably some prowling shark has made a breakfast of it. I tried to bring it home. First I put it under the cabin table. "Don't risk it in the hold," said the second mate, "the rats will have it."

Under the table it stayed for a day or two, but it was too much for us. Every time we sat down to meals we kicked the awful thing; its subtle odour flavoured our food. Somebody would send it flying across the cabin floor, and there it would lie until one of us tripped over it in the dark; it was an odoriferous nuisance. Last of all I hung it up; but as we stumbled across the unsteady floor as the ship rolled along, we used to meet that unsavoury shape with our faces. The very look of the bloated thing took our appetites away. The voting was unanimous and pressing: "Overboard with it," so I regretfully cast it to the sharks, and watched it dance upon the waves, as it had often danced for big Julius when he had a seal.

But I must go back to the morning when I first saw seal hunting: Our particular seal hunt on that November morning was partly an accidental one. I was sitting in the stern of the boat, watching the rocks and the water. It was a new thing to me, this scum of ice that the waves were flinging up; and the spray from the oars was freezing as the wind whipped it over the side of the boat.

I could see the kayaks further out, paddling about in an aimless sort of way; but I was mostly watching the line of glistening boulders at the foot of the rocks, with the oily-looking sea swilling over them, and the sunshine gleaming on the crust of ice which the waves were leaving on them. The man with the sculling-pole, who was standing beside me in the stern, suddenly whispered "Puije" (a seal) and his face grew tense and eager. The oarsmen stopped and turned to look, while Jerry, the owner of the boat, hurriedly crammed a cartridge into his rifle.

This was all very mysterious to me. I was looking all round for a head above the water, or for any bubbles or disturbance that might mean a seal; but everything seemed as usual; the dots of kayaks went paddling on, and the sea swilled over the stones.

Jerry seemed to aim at the line of boulders below the rocks, and my eyes followed the

line of his barrel; but I saw nothing until the bang started a splodge of red on one of the stones. The red seemed to slide into the water, and the boat was off with a jerk. The oarsmen pulled with all their might; the man at the stern was rolling the boat from side to side with the force of his sculling; and Jerry was eagerly looking out, and shouting terse directions. There seemed to be nothing but the red patch upon the rocks, where the water was all stained with blood; but as the steersman brought the boat sweeping round the others pulled in their oars and leaned over the side, and in less time than it takes to tell I was helping them to heave a big seal into the boat. It came sliding over and flopped down, and lay there, limp and lifeless, with whiskers quivering and big eyes seeming to gaze. It looked just like one of the rocks near by; its silvery coat, flecked with black and shining with wet, was a perfect imitation of the black boulders with their coating of ice and the water swilling over them. No wonder my eyes could not see it when the steersman did; but Eskimo eyes are different.

I spent that night in a greenhouse!

That is an odd thing for frozen Labrador; but this is the way it came about. The missionary at Okak had tried to grow early vegetables; but, poor man, his attempts had

failed, by reason of the awful frost. He had even hired an old Eskimo woman to sleep in the greenhouse on the nippiest nights, and keep up a fire to prevent the cabbages and lettuces from freezing; he banked his greenhouse round with a thick wall of snow; he had a sackcloth cover made to put over it like a blanket; but in spite of the snow wall, and in spite of the blanket, and in spite, even, of the old woman and her fire, the greenhouse did no good. Okak was too cold a place for greenhouses. So the missionary sold the greenhouse to one of the seal hunters for a few dollars, and the happy hunter made a home of it. And there I slept, on the floor, of course, wrapped in a sealskin sleeping-bag, with the dogs prowling about outside and snuffing at the glass walls, and the stars twinkling through the glass roof.

It was a cold place for a home: in the morning the bread was frozen, and the water in the bucket was just a solid lump of ice, the butter was like stone, and the tinned milk was wonderfully stiff—stretching out in long strings when we tried to help ourselves with spoons; but the hunter's wife was up at dawn to light a fire, and in spite of the frost we had a hot breakfast before we went out of doors.

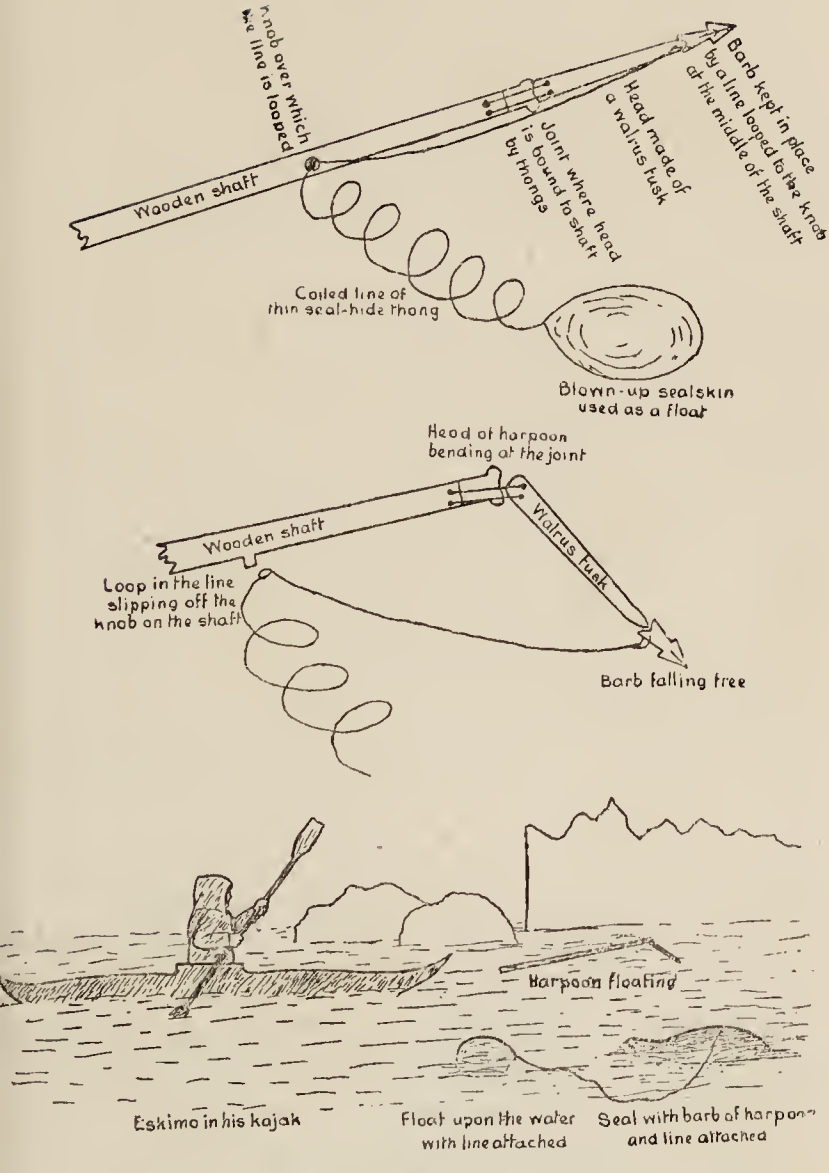
I wanted to see the hauling of the seal net;

and in the keen air of that autumn morning I felt the cold as I had never felt it before.

The winter that came afterwards was far less biting; for the autumn wind, blowing over the freezing sea, nipped and chilled me as nothing that I have ever known. It was interesting enough to see the Eskimos trotting down to the rocks where the shore-rope lay, and where the float that marked the far end of the net danced on the black water. I was half frozen, stamping about to get warm; and they—they cheerfully pulled the wet ropes up, chewing at their pipes and chatting merrily, and every now and again stopping to wring the water out of their sodden gloves. The cold did not seem to bite them: "Unêt" (what does it matter), they said, "it is our life: we are made for it"; and they pulled their stiffening gloves on again to keep the rope from chafing their hands. They got the heavy seals out all stiff and dead, and piled them in a sort of stockade to freeze, ready to be fetched home during the winter. One was partly eaten by sharks. "Sharks no good at all," they said; "eat the seals and break the nets. Sometimes we catch him, but he is no good except for dogs' food, and his skin makes fine sandpaper for smoothing the sled runners."

For a fortnight the hunters were busy with their nets and their kayaks; and then the

sea was frozen, and the seal hunt was over for the season. The seals were away to their winter haunts at the edge of the ocean ice; winter had begun—and the nets were frozen in. It happens the same way every year: the people want to make the most of their opportunity, and they cannot tell exactly when the sea will freeze, so they leave the nets in the water a day too long rather than have them up a day too soon; and every year they have the awkward job of hacking them out. They waste no time in getting their axes to work, for every minute the ice is getting thicker. As soon as ever they see that the ice has covered their bay, they trot down to the beach and begin one of the coldest pieces of work that it is possible to imagine. They only need to free the ropes where they dip below the surface, for the net is at the sea bottom, and once freed with the axes there is nothing to do but haul. But the hauling! In my eagerness I lent a hand at the rope, but my fingers stiffened round it, and I suffered all the agony of gripping a red-hot poker. My poor hands ached for hours. And the Eskimos tugged at the rope, and gathered up the meshes all stiffening in the wind and dripping with icicles, and piled the net on the rocks above high-water mark, and rubbed their hands indifferently, and ambled off to get their sleds.



AN ESKIMO HARPOON

CHAPTER XI

The edge of the ice—Gustaf's breakfast—Rafting on ice—Jakko and Rena—Catching a walrus—An old custom—Martin's seal.

DURING the long winter that followed the homecoming of the families to their wooden homes in the village the men were seldom idle. In my visits to the houses I always found the women in charge, and my question "Aipait nannekâ ?" (where is your husband ?) nearly always brought the answer "Sinâmut aigivok" (he is off to the edge of the ice again). That is the hunting-place that the Eskimos love, the edge of the ocean ice, where the seals sport in the chilly water or clamber on the ice to rest. Sometimes, when sudden sickness has called me into the village in the small hours of the morning, I have heard the scufflings and yelpings of dogs, and have seen dim and shadowy men, dressed in sealskin clothes, trotting down the track among the hummocks towards the sea ice, off to the "sinâ."

When I talked about the sinâ to big Gustaf he simply said, "We go, eh ? Start at four :

I will wake you up," taking it for granted that if I went at all I would do it in a proper Eskimo style. As this was more or less of a pleasure trip I made a sort of compromise with good Gustaf's ideas on the subject, and the clock was well on towards five before I met him on the doorstep.

I was fortified with a good breakfast of bacon and eggs—eggs kept in waterglass since the ship brought them last summer—but Gustaf would have none. "No," he said, "I shall eat by and by"; and from what I had seen of Eskimo mealtimes I imagined him disposing of several pounds of seal meat and a pint or two of weak tea when the day's work was done.

Nevertheless I saw that he was chewing, pensively chewing with a steady champ, champ, champ, as he disentangled the dogs from one another.

"What are you chewing?" said I.

"Koak" (frozen), answered Gustaf; and he went on to tell me that he had got a mouthful of frozen raw seal meat: that was plenty, it was the custom of the people. "Splendid," said Gustaf, "this makes me warm: this gives me sinews," and he smiled as he chewed at his leathery mouthful. I envied him his warmth, for on those cold Labrador mornings

the effects of bacon and hot coffee are soon gone, and I found that I must try to trot in the darkness to keep my toes from freezing. It was the middle of the morning before we got among the lumps and hummocks of the sinâ, and there were the sled tracks and the footprints of other hunters who had come out earlier than we. The ice at the sinâ is nearly always rough and uneven, for the force of the waves is always cracking the ice and raising it up, and as fast as the waves crack the great ice field the terrible frost welds the pieces together again. We passed a little snow hut, hidden in a hollow, a tiny hut that seemed too small to hold a man.

" Johannes, maybe," said Gustaf, " he came here yesterday, so as to be early "—and there the little man whom I knew so well from my sled journeys had spent the night, ready to be up before the dawn and catch the seals before they should begin to think of danger. Gustaf had brought his gun, and was crouching with eager face among the hummocks. Presently I heard a bang, and Gustaf went running towards the water, his soft little boots pad-padding on the hard ice and his shaggy hair waving. Soon I saw him rafting on a floating piece of ice, paddling off to fetch his prize ; and I shivered to think of the hundreds

of feet of icy water beneath him as he balanced himself on his dangerous perch. But he got his seal, and no doubt if you had asked him why he had done so risky a thing he would have stared at you with wondering eyes, and would have said, "There was no skin canoe for me to have, and I could not lose that seal: it is the custom of the people to do so." Perhaps he rather liked the spice of danger, if he knew what danger was. But danger there is, as we learnt not many days later, when a sled drove in to Okak Bay with an Eskimo boy sitting upon it. He sat strangely still, and that was enough to make us think that something was wrong, for an Eskimo driver is nearly always trotting beside his sled. The dogs turned hungrily towards their accustomed door, but the boy took no notice of them, but left them in their harness and ran towards the Mission house. I watched him pass, ashen faced, panting, stumbling; and a little later I heard his story. At first incoherently, then with graphic gestures and loud lamentations he told his tale; and here it is.

His name was Rena, and he had started at daybreak for the edge of the ice. His brother, Jakko, was with him, and they were after seals. They had a harpoon and a gun, and they talked as they went of the splendid

hunt they would have on so fine a day. Tautuk ! such clear, calm water and so many seals swimming about ; it was a real day for the sinâ, and before they had been there many minutes Jakko had shot a seal. It was wounded and floated on the water, lashing with its flippers but too weak to dive. Oh for a boat or a kayak ; but they had none, and reach the seal they must. They did what Eskimos always have done in like circumstances and always will do ; they clambered on a piece of loose ice and paddled with their hands towards the seal.

They got on fairly well until they were twenty or thirty yards from the edge of the ice field and the seal was near enough to be speared. Jakko stood up and poised his harpoon, ready to strike, while Rena paddled gently with his hands to steady the ice-raft. The change of position must have upset the balance of the ice, for no sooner did Jakko stand up than it began to heel slowly over. For a moment they were too intent on the seal to notice their peril, but as the movement increased it dawned upon them that they were turning over. And then the slow-witted Jakko had one of those flashes of inspiration that come to people at critical times : with a quick cry of " Stay where you are, Rena," he jumped

into the water. Exactly what was in his mind we never knew. One thing is certain—he saw the danger. If both stayed upon the ice it would upset and both would be in the water; Jakko could swim a little, but Rena had never learnt a stroke. Did Jakko think that he could reach the safety of the big icefield by swimming, or did he say in his mind, "Better one to be drowned than both?" I do not know: all that Rena could say was that he felt the ice-pan rolling over; he heard the shout of "Stay where you are," and saw his brother leap into the waves. And that was all. The raft of ice righted itself with a lurch that nearly flung him off; but he managed to keep his hold, and paddled frantically to and fro in a vain search for his brother. Poor Rena paddled and paddled and paddled until his hands were stiff and his brain reeled, but never a sight did he see of Jakko. Jakko was gone, sunk like a stone in the freezing water; and hours after the disaster Rena gave up the search, and with his eyes blinded with tears he scrambled from his frail island on to the safe ice field, flung himself on the sled, and let the dogs take him home.

That is the true story of two Eskimo boys that I knew, Jakko and Rena Mellik; and it seems to me that Jakko was a real hero,

for in the hour of danger he thought not of himself but of his brother, and for his brother he gave his life.

There was gloom for a few days after the tragedy of Jakko; but the Eskimos soon forget; bereavement does not wound them very deeply; and soon the village wore its usual air of subdued bustle, and away at the sinâ the hunters were after the seals.

But seals are not the only quarry; by far the best fortune that a man can have at the sinâ is to catch sight of a walrus resting on the ice. The man's idea is to rush boldly upon the great beast and spear or shoot it while it is too dazed to move. It has no chance: it is unwieldy and slow, and has hardly made up its mind which way to turn before the hunter is upon it and its life is over. "Yes," said Gustaf, when I asked him about it, "Eskimo make a noise and run fast, and Aivek (walrus) stay there all the time and get killed plenty soon. Go quiet, creep, creep, creep, and old Aivek smell Eskimo and crawl off to the water. Flop, gone, no catch him now; plenty frightened, no good."

I knew very well while Gustaf was telling me all this in his queer broken English, with many wavings of his hands and the most expressive of grins and shrugs, that he would

be quite ready to embark in his kayak and hunt the walrus in its native element. A walrus is, no doubt, a formidable beast; its ferocious eyes and bristling whiskers and great gleaming tusks make a terrible picture; and the very weight of its tremendous rush would be enough to frighten most folks, quite apart from the uncanny agility the huge animal displays. But the Eskimo in his kayak is a match for the walrus; he is every whit as active, and twice as sharp-witted; and if the men at the sinâ see a walrus disporting himself in the water they are after him like a shot; and though they do not often have the chance that my Killinek guide had, paddling into the middle of a school of walruses and calmly harpooning the old bull because he had the best tusks, they seldom let the odd ones and twos escape if they get within striking distance.

Landing a walrus is no joke. I say "landing" because it is the only word to convey the idea of hauling the great carcase out of the water on to the ice, and the ice is every bit as good as land to the Eskimos. What a walrus weighs I do not know, but it stands to reason that a creature fourteen feet long and fourteen feet round the middle is an enormous lump to lift.

No Eskimo would dream of trying to pack a whole walrus on his sled; for one thing it would roll off at the first lurch, and, for another thing, I hardly think that any sled could stand the strain. Gustaf grinned and shook his head at this idea of mine. "My sled stand anything," he said; "got no nails in it, only fine seal-hide thongs; very strong"; and though Gustaf may have overrated his sled, I have seen him drive his twenty dogs up to the Mission house with a load of drinking water, two great puncheons of it, full half a ton in weight, and that should be a fair test of workmanship. But another reason for cutting up a walrus at the sinâ is that an old Eskimo custom says it must be so.

And the custom is that every one who sees the capture of a walrus must have a share. The lucky hunter skins his huge catch, and chops it into lumps and hands the pieces round. If you were there yourself upon a pleasure trip you would get a great piece of the red raw meat thrust upon you! You might like to eat it; certainly the Eskimos smack their lips over it and say "piovok"—good; and the tenderer parts of the flesh are quite palatable when your table lacks fresh meat; but really to enjoy Eskimo food you must have good Eskimo teeth, made for chewing

tough things. I found that the people were very fond of boiled walrus skin ; but it needs a great deal of boiling before English teeth will meet in it, and those parts of the skin that the people do not want to boil and eat can be made into great hard dog whips, and strong and heavy drags for the sleds.

One day during the winter, when the hunters were busily going to and fro, hunting seals at the sinâ, I saw a boy walking along the village path, carrying what looked to me like a very large and slimy slug. Whatever horrible thing had the lad got ? He carried it by the middle, and it dangled quivering on each side of his hand. He had an air of importance with him, and everyone he met stopped to have a word with him, and to take a look at his loathsome handful.

What was it ?

Behind him marched his father and mother, both looking very proud. " Hai, Martin," I shouted, " what have you got ? "

" Kissek " (sealskin), he said ; and came trotting along to unroll his package on the snow, and display a fresh sealskin well scraped and washed and sodden with brine, which is never a pleasant object. " My first seal," he said, grinning shyly. " I caught it yesterday."

He seemed in a hurry to be off, so I let

him go without further question, and watched the little procession make its way to the Mission house. During the evening I saw his father again, and broached the subject of Martin's sealskin.

Lukas's eyes brightened. "Illa, illa," he said, "Martin angusimavok" (Martin has quite caught a seal)—as much as to say, "My son is a grown-up hunter now: he is a man."

"And what was he doing with the sealskin?" said I.

"Issumaminik" (his own idea), answered Lukas; and he wandered off into a long story of the catching of the seal. "I took him to the sinâ yesterday, to look after my dogs; but there came a seal very close, and I lent Martin my gun, and he shot it.

"Kuvianarmêk (what rejoicing there was)—there were many people there, and Martin cried, 'Anguvara, anguvara,' and they all came running to see. He knows how to skin a seal and cut it up, because he has often seen his mother do it. Illa, he is a man now, ernera-una (that son of mine)."

"He caught the seal himself, with his own hand. Nakomêk (how thankful). And he cut the seal in pieces, and gave everybody a piece, for that is a custom of the people when a boy

kills his first seal. He saved the liver for his father and mother, as is right to do; and he put a big special lump of the best meat on the sled because his mother told him to do so, and we brought it home.

"What shall we do with it? Illa"—with a twinkle—"that is for old Henrietta. She was his nurse when he was a baby: she it was who cared for him when he was a little child. Surely she shall have a share of Martin's first seal—and, besides, it is a custom of the people. The blubber he will sell at the store to-morrow, and that will be the first money he has earned at the seal hunt: Illa, he is very proud and thankful. Now he shall go with me to the sinâ every day, except when he must stay at home and chop firewood for his mother, for he is a good boy, ernera-una; and he will catch seals often, and learn to be as fine a hunter as his father—better, perhaps, for my eyes are not as good as they were. And soon, when I am an itok (old man) and his mother is a ningiok (old woman) he will go alone to the hunt and bring seals every day, and I shall stop at home and chop the firewood; and he will have a wife to help the ningiok scrape the skins, and the kittorngakulluit (little children) will play about the floor. But I still have nukke (sinews): I will

go to the sinâ to-morrow, and he will chop wood. And the skin ? The skin of Martin's first seal ? Illa, issumaminik, it was quite his own idea. We had been reading how the people of Israel used to give the first-fruits to God, and Martin thought he would like to do that with the first seal he had ever caught ; so he took the skin to the missionary, and that is how you saw him yesterday."

CHAPTER XII

Trapping fur—The dog that limped—A wolverine—Jerry and the footprints—The deer scouts—The hunt—Johannes again.

THERE are no idle days in an Eskimo winter.

Even when the weather is too stormy for a man to venture out of doors, he can mend his harpoon and his dogs' harness, he can polish up his gun, or he can sit carving pieces of walrus tusk into little birds and seals and sleds, while his wife cleans and combs the latest catch of fur. It may be a marten or a fox over which she is bending, sometimes even a black fox that will sell for hundreds of dollars; and the woman's eyes gleam as she thinks of all the money that the fur will bring, and of all the things that the money will buy.

And on days when the weather is fine the men will tramp away to their fox traps, plodding over the deep soft snow on great broad snow shoes, carrying pieces of rotten meat for bait, and hoping to catch a fine black fox.

Alas for the thieving dogs! A man may

go miles and miles from the village to set his traps, but sometimes the dogs will follow or find their way by the scent or the footprints, and then instead of a beautiful furry fox there is a lean and angry dog in the trap! I was out on a sled one day with an Eskimo, when I saw that one of his dogs was limping.

It ran as fast as the others, and seemed to do its share of the pulling, but still there was the limp. "Is your big yellow dog lame," I asked. The man smiled. "Bad old rascal," said he, "that old dog got his foot fast in a fox trap last winter, and so he lost some toes"; and as he spoke he caught the dog's trace and hauled him back to the sled, and took him on his knees and held him fast for me to see; and sure enough, there was a scar across the old dog's foot, where the trap had nipped the toes. The poor dog was frightened while his driver held him; he thought that he was going to be whipped; he struggled and whined, and as soon as the driver let him go he raced away with his tail between his legs and his head down, and pulled at his trace and whined and whimpered. Dogs always think that they are in disgrace if they are pulled back to the sled, for that is the way an Eskimo makes sure of giving the needed thrashing to the right dog—no dodging

among the others, in the hope that some other back will get a share of the beating: but perhaps he whimpered partly because there was some memory in his doggy mind of that day last winter when he went a-wandering in the woods and smelt a beautiful smell of rotten meat. Perhaps in his mind he was licking his lips over the memory of that lovely smell: it was just the thing that an Eskimo dog would enjoy—a piece of seal flipper, horrible and nasty; it was buried in the snow by the stump of a tree, but the big dog nosed it out and pawed the snow away. Then there was a horrid snap, and a great steel trap had him fast by the foot. He howled and struggled, but it was a long time before he got free and limped home again. His master looked at him when he came out with the tub of dogs' food that evening. "Ha," he said, "I see where you have been, you greedy rascal. Why can you not leave the traps for the foxes, and be content with your own food at home, you bad old thing?" And then he found a piece of sealskin, and tied the poor foot up to save it from the frost-bite, and so the toes got well again. But the fox trap by the tree stump up in the woods is the reason why that big yellow dog limps when he runs with the rest of the team.

It sometimes happens that the Eskimo catches a Tartar in his fox trap, if the smell of the putrid bait of rank and rotten seal meat chances to attract a wandering wolverine. The powerful brute, finding itself fast, marches off with the trap, snarling and grumbling at the pain; and before the hunter can add it to his bag he has a weary trail through the woods, up and down, to and fro, following the blood-stained line of the trailing trap, and at the end of it all he has to face a sharp encounter with one of the most dangerous things a man can meet, a mad and furious wolverine. He is probably thankful to shoot the beast before it does him an injury—if he has a gun with him.

As a matter of fact, the men seldom go to their traps without their guns. It is not that they have danger or big game in their minds, but because there is always a chance of meeting a partridge (rock ptarmigan) on the road, and a partridge, eaten raw and warm, is a real delicacy to Eskimo ways of thinking.

There is bigger game for those who seek it; I have heard the scufflings of a wolf among the dogs when we camped in a snow hut on the mountain pass, and I have known the drivers stop the sled among the stunted trees on some

Photo lent by Moravian Missions.

HOME FROM THE HUNT

The sledge has just arrived from the sealing place with a fair-sized seal upon it, and the people are collecting, as they always do, to inspect and to pass remarks. The man on the left is just home from his traps with a marten; he also will come in for a share of good-natured attention.

Photo lent by Moravian Missions.

WINTER FISHING

During March, when seals are rather scarce and the reindeer hunt has not begun, the Eskimos depend a good deal on the fish they catch under the ice. They have a marvellous knowledge of the haunts of the rock-cod, and walk miles to their favourite places.

desolate neck of land between the fiords, and have watched them peering at the spoor of a bear in the snow. "Tumingit" (his footprints), they say. "Old, no good."

It is remarkable how long one may live in Labrador without seeing any of these fur animals in the wild state; as for myself, the nearest I ever got to a bear was when Paulus came to me and said, "Me kill a bear—you want some, eh?" and so for next day's dinner we had a roast haunch of black bear on the table, and found it excellent.

It is wonderful to see how keen the Eskimos are to notice footprints. Hares and weasels and lemmings and martens, and all the other animals that may have crossed your path as you travel on your dog sled, all leave tracks that the Eskimos can tell. Your driver will tell you how long it is since the animal passed; whether it was running or walking; how big it was; and you soon learn to know something of these tracks for yourself, and stop to peer and study whenever you come upon some footprints that seem strange.

I stopped my sled one day by the side of a great bank of snow. A queer little track ran down the bank and across our path, as though some tiny animal had hopped that way. It was not a bird, for there were no marks of

outspread claws: it was a one-legged sort of a track, and it puzzled me.

I called Jerry, our great seal hunter, who was driving my sled, and asked him about this curious line of footprints. Jerry looked at the tracks, and he looked at the snow bank; and then he looked at me. "Those footprints," he said, and his face was ever so grave, "those footprints are the footprints of a little piece of snow rolling down the snow bank." Then we drove on.

The Eskimos themselves are always on the tracks of one sort of animal or another; hunting is their very life, and as the days of winter went by, and the excitement of sealing at the sinâ and trapping in the woods began to wane, I was not surprised that there was something else to occupy their thoughts. "Tuktu" began to be the burden of their talk from morning till night.

The men stood chattering in groups; the women indoors were sewing and mending from dawn to sunset and sometimes far into the night; "Tuktu, tuktu, tuktu," was in everybody's mouth—the reindeer hunt was coming. Presently the word went round that the scouts were out, and everybody lived in a fever of excitement. This was early in March; and all day long the people were

going in twos and threes to the top of the nearest hill, to watch the sled track for the homecoming of the scouts. The real hunting does not begin till Easter Tuesday, for such is the custom that the people have made for themselves, and no man would dream of stopping away from the special meetings in the church during Easter week for the sake of hunting deer; but so eager are the men to have everything ready, and so full are they all of the talk of the coming of the deer, that before Easter several of the hunters will certainly go out as scouts to spy out the land, and to bring back reports of the likelihood of a good hunt.

The later Easter comes, the more likely are the scouts to go; and when I missed this or the other familiar face among the men, and asked, "Where is So-and-so?" I was certain of the answer, "He has gone a-scouting." These scouts do not often bring home any meat: they have done their part if they bring home some sort of a report, whether it be "I saw no deer yet," or "I have seen tracks: they seem to be near," or, best of all, "I saw three deer in the distance: I think those are the leaders of the herd." At the report of deer tracks the excitement bubbles over into energy. Men stand grouped round

sleds in the snow, planning and smoothing and polishing the runners, binding up slack joints and patching weak places with plates of iron; harpoons are pushed among the rafters of the roof, and kayaks are hoisted on poles, out of reach of the prowling dogs; women are stitching as if for dear life, getting ready for the great occasion, all eager to send their men out with the best boots and clothing possible; there is stir and bustle everywhere, and work and chatter go on in every hut from morning to night.

All this is a prelude to the great deer hunt; and at last the day comes, and with shoutings and crackings of whips the sleds are away in the dark of the morning, and the hunters have started. I have watched them off in the gathering light, stern-faced and eager, each man to his own sled, and mostly alone. A boy of thirteen is handy with a gun, and useful to take care of the dogs; but smaller folk must stay at home, beseech they never so prettily. The deer hunt is no time for useless weight upon the sled: I knew a man who took his wife with him, but the lady had to walk the seventy or eighty miles home, trailing laboriously beside the sled, because there was such a glorious load of meat and skins that the dogs could haul no more; and up the

hills she tasted some of the hardships of the third-class travellers in the old English coaching days—she had to push.

On Easter Tuesday morning the sleds make their start, and track westward up the frozen rivers and through the winding valleys to the moss-covered wilderness where the reindeer find their food. The hunters have no luggage on their sleds : no tent, no sleeping gear, only a scrap of dried seal meat or fish for themselves and the dogs, and a gun, an axe, a knife, a packet of sticking plaster for the inevitable cuts, and a tin of grease for their sunburnt lips and cheeks—that is their whole equipment, with the occasional addition of a kettle for the making of a cup of Eskimo tea, weak as water, and flavoured with a mouthful of molasses out of a bottle.

They start together, but after a while they get separated, and travel in ones and twos, or alone. This man's dogs are slow, and lag behind ; the other man wants to try such and such a valley instead of the beaten trail ; and so they separate.

When night comes they build snow huts for shelter, and sleep on a bed of dogs' harness spread on the hard snow floor—not for any great comfort there is in it, but because if they left it outside the dogs would devour it

in the night. In the morning each man boils his own tea and munches his own solitary feed of dried meat or ship's biscuit, harnesses his team, and drives on alone. Alone he travels where his fancy leads him: he will find the deer. Solitude has no terrors for the Eskimo; it wakens his best instincts; it matters not that he meets nobody, sees nobody; alone he finds his way to the hunt and back again, trusting to his marvellous memory for landmarks, and guided by the stars and the sunrise.

It was a bleak, raw morning when I first saw the reindeer hunters start: they had their skin clothes tied round with scarves to keep the wind out, and they had their heads down as they faced the bleak gusts. Before ten o'clock a hurricane was raging, and I feared for the safety of the men. But they came back, with the storm roaring behind them; first Jerry, then Abia, then others in twos and threes, all with the same tale—"Ajornarpok (it is impossible), we must start tomorrow." "Are you all safe?" I asked them; and Jerry counted them over on his fingers. "Yes," he said, "we are all here: all except Johannes." "And Johannes, where is he?" "Atsuk"—the laconic answer, so characteristic of the Eskimo—"I don't know." But I was

anxious. "Unêt," they said—as if to say, "Just don't you bother your head about Johannes; you can't lose him, we all know that. He's safe enough."

Next day was stormy again, and there was no Johannes. I thought of search parties, but the people only smiled; and, when the weather cleared, off they went again with their dogs and their sleds, with never a word about the missing man. For ten days nothing happened; then the women waiting on the hill yelled "Kemmutsit, kemmutsit" (a sled, a sled), and I climbed the hill and saw a dot of a sled and a tiny blur of dogs with an active little ant of a driver slipping slowly down from the woods at the mouth of the big river to the wood-cutter's track over the ice.

"Johannes, immakka," they said, and strolled down the hill to meet him. And Johannes it was, smiling and happy, and brown and well; proudly shoving at a sled piled high with meat and skins, and shouting and cooing and chuckling to the toiling dogs.

Willing women tore the pile to pieces, and carried it into the hut; an army of small boys fought for the privilege of unharnessing the dogs—no doubt to the huge disgust of the poor dogs, which had to wait with what patience they could muster until the scuffling

was finished, thankful at last to slink out of the way of the tumbling mob; and Johannes himself seized a great pair of antlers that had topped the load, and brought them over as a present for myself. I looked at the happy little man; and as I looked there was a picture in my mind of a solitary little fur-clad Eskimo driving a team of ten wolfish and hungry dogs into the very teeth of an Arctic storm. "Why did you not turn back with the others?" I asked him. Johannes's eyes twinkled.

"It is quite a long time since I slept in a snow house," he said, "so I built a snow house instead of turning back, and I sat inside and listened to the storm. It was splendid. And now I am the first home with meat. I will go and fetch you a leg."

CHAPTER XIII

The Eskimo baby—Abraha in bed—Eskimo names—Choosing surnames—Girls and their dolls—Boys at play—Learning to be men—Punting on the ice—In school.

WHO would not be an Eskimo baby? The very first nest it goes into is a charming bag of baby-reindeer skin, with the fur inside, soft and warm; and there the baby sleeps, safe from all draughts and chills and cold toes. Hung on the wall, or propped against the end of the bed, the bag looks like a giant watch-pocket; indeed, one good Eskimo housewife must have been struck by the likeness herself, for she brought me a miniature one when I left Labrador, and told me that it would do to keep my watch from getting sick with the frost.

The baby spends most of its early days asleep in its bag, stuffed feet downwards into the hood of its mother's sealskin or blanket dicky, but as time passes and it begins to feel the desire to kick, it discards the pocket and nestles in the depths of the hood, and you may see its beady and wide-awake eyes

peering over its mother's shoulder as she walks along. Sometimes the mother tires of the weight, and, for the sake of a rest, dumps the baby on a snowdrift to play. "Poor little mite!" I fancy I hear somebody saying, "will it not catch cold?" But there the fat little object sits, chuckling and goo-ing and grabbing handfuls of snow.

I have often seen small girls playing nurse-maid, strutting along with the big hood hanging lumpily over their backs, and the long tail trailing on the snow. They have no big hood of their own; a girl is not allowed to have one until she is old enough to get married; so the little girl who sets out to act as nurse-maid borrows her mother's. She would be helpless without a hood; no Eskimo baby would be satisfied with any other sort of perambulator; there is a queer swaying of the shoulders as the girl walks along that gently swings the baby from side to side, and rocks it to sleep in a way that no amount of pushing about on wheels or sled runners would ever do.

While their sisters are making themselves useful by minding the baby, the boys spend all their time playing in the snow or on the water. Boys are always out of doors: no weather seems too cold for them, no snow too

deep or soft or wet for their games. You may imagine how surprised I was when I went into an Eskimo house one bright spring day, and found a healthy-looking little boy in bed.

This was a strange sight; it was surely not a case of illness, for there was no mistaking the mischief that twinkled in those bright little eyes that followed all my movements; but here was Abraha in bed in broad daylight, while all the other boys—and babies too, for that matter—were shouting and playing out of doors. I cast about for a cause of the phenomenon. "Ah," I thought, "Abraha's mother has an eye to her boy's welfare after all: it is not all callousness; she has the mother's instinct to care for her children."

Above the stove there stretched a string, and on the string there hung a row of little boots and trousers and shirt and dicky, sopping with moisture and steaming in the warmth. So there was a limit to the lengths to which the child might go unchecked. "Yes," she said, "he has tumbled through the ice and got wet through, and he must stay in bed till his clothes are dry: I cannot let him have his Sunday clothes, for he would spoil them—uivêtokulluk" (the little rascal) —this last with a smile of real motherly pride at the restless little fellow in the bed.

"Aksunai, Abraha," I said; and Abraha turned his face away with a sheepish air, and buried himself in the bedclothes.

In heathen times the Eskimos had heathen names, and rare mouthfuls of the language some of the names were, great unwieldy strings of letters, sometimes with a meaning, appropriate or otherwise, and sometimes without. Among the heathen people who have lately settled at Killinek, I found a boy and a girl both called Nippisâ, and I came across a little girl whose parents knew her by the burdensome title of Atataksoak (grandfather)!

The Christian Eskimos who people the Labrador coast to-day have proper baptismal names, mostly biblical, such as Moses, Laban, Thomas, Miriam, Sarah, and so on. This habit of choosing Bible names seems a very fitting one among a people reclaimed from heathenism; it is a constant witness and reminder of the change they profess and of the God they serve. And I like those old Bible names that I met among the Eskimos, for the people steer clear of the long and difficult names, and choose those that are simple and dignified and easy to pronounce.

I can well imagine that the large assortment of Samuels and Labans and Michaels and Jonathans to be found along the coats

used to lead to some confusion, and that is the reason why the Mission ordained some years ago that the heads of the various families should choose surnames. Then there was some scratching of heads and racking of brains to choose a name that all the families could like; and many, I expect, were the arguments and the palavers before the choice was made.

Some men found a way out of the difficulty by simply doubling the name they already had, like Laban Laban or Josef Josef; some chose Eskimo words, like our organist at Okak, who called himself Sillit (Grindstone), or my big sled driver, who was Kakkarsuk (Little Mountain); some followed the old plan of calling themselves after their occupation, like the teacher in the Eskimo day school, who became Illiniartitsijok (Schoolmaster), or the village coffin maker, who called himself Igloliorte (The Builder of Houses !).

Others went a little deeper in their search for names. One little man, who surely had some poetry in his soul, called himself Atserta-tak, "because," he said, "that sounds to me like the noise that the little birds make, and we are as happy as a family of little birds." And some there were who took the ordinary English names that they heard among the

fisher-folk, and spelt them in extraordinary Eskimo ways, like Braun and Grîn! So the Eskimos got their surnames.

As I sit, pen in hand, looking back over those fascinating years in Okak, there come to my mind pictures upon pictures of the Eskimo children at their play; and I think again, how true it is that the playtime years of childhood are a preparation for the active work of grown-up life. "The child is father to the man" is a saying that holds true of the Eskimos even more than of most peoples. The Eskimo baby is born to live an Eskimo life; the boy will grow up to be a hunter like his father; the girl will be a mother some day, busy over the clothing and the sealskins and the bootmaking; and the inherited aptitude for the ordinary work of an Eskimo life shows itself and shapes itself in the children's games. I have seen the girls playing at "shop," and the boys playing at "rounders" with a rag ball, but these are games that they have learnt from the missionaries' children, mere interludes in their ordinary play.

An Eskimo girl plays at being mother, just as girls do all the world over, and there is generally a baby brother or sister to lend reality to the play. The real mother does

not bother much about the baby if there are big sisters to look after it.

If there is no baby to be nursed, the girls play with dolls. I suppose there have been dolls among the Eskimos from time immemorial —dolls of stone or bone, scraped and scrubbed into shape with hard flint stones; dolls of wood, with wide-eyed, staring faces, carved after the Eskimo cast with high cheekbones and broad, flat noses; and dolls nondescript, mere bundles of rags, or rather of sealskin scraps, tied with thongs at the waist and neck, and with features only visible to the fond little make-believe mother.

Some of the little girls are the proud owners of flaxen-haired dollies from the English shops, but most of them have to be content with the native article, whittled from a stick of firewood by a fond father; but whatever sort of a dolly it be, the little mother dresses it in Eskimo clothes.

I have seen the children sitting on the floor, planning and chattering, cutting out clothes for their dolls after the unchanging Eskimo pattern, making dickys and trousers with a due eye to the economy of cloth, and learning, all unconsciously, to cut and make the real clothes. By daytime the doll is an Eskimo baby, poked feet first into its little mother's

hood, and marched from side to side of the hut or among the houses of the village; and, if she does not know that she is watched, the little girl will put on all the serious air of motherhood, and sway her body to and fro, hushing and humming to get her fractious dolly to sleep. At night the child undresses her doll, and lays it to rest on a scrap of deerskin spread on a toy bedstead of boards, and covers it with a gay quilt, and leaves it to sleep while she clambers into her own wooden bed and pulls her own deerskin or patchwork counterpane over her. It is the little girls' chief game, this serious game of learning to be grown up.

The boys are playing the same game in their own way, but it always seemed to me that there is vastly more fun and frolic in a boy's life. One of the most fascinating relaxations of our long winter was to watch the boys at play.

Every day we could hear their shouts as they romped and tumbled in the snow. They rolled huge snowballs, and hollowed them out and hid in them; they built proper little beehive snow huts, and joined them by tunnels under the snow; and, more than anything else, they sledded and slid down the hills. There was a steep slope beside my window,

THE ESKIMO BOY

A favourite boys' game—punting on the broken ice in the spring-time—and all the more dangerous because none of them can swim.

where the drifting snow had filled the bed of the stream, and this was the great sledding-place. I watched them with a good deal of trepidation as they careered down on little wooden runners strapped to their feet—miniature ski, whittled from a stick of the family firewood—but I never heard of an accident. However fast they were going they seemed able to dodge the lumps in the path, and avoided collisions by twisting round in a sharp curve. If they fell at all, they always seemed to tumble into a snowdrift, and picked themselves up and shook their shaggy heads, and tramped up the hill again shouting with laughter. Sometimes they tried the less exciting forms of tobogganing, dragging out little sleds made for one, and built after the Eskimo pattern with the cross-pieces bound with thongs to the runners, and bumped madly down the hill; or a party of boys and girls joined at one of the big travelling sleds, yelling and laughing, and shoving one another off into the snow; but the boys preferred their sliding shoes.

Sometimes a man's first present to his little son is a toy whip, with a lash five or six feet long; and children hardly out of their babyhood crawl about the floor shouting at imaginary dogs and dealing vicious smacks at them.

Out of doors the boys play with full-sized whips, and it is wonderful to see the way in which they manage the thirty feet of lash. They set an empty tin upon a hummock, and flick it off time after time at the full length of the whip; or two of them wage a hot battle, each trying to entangle the other's lash. Whips and sleds are the Eskimo boy's chief playthings, usually combined with the useful but very unwilling dog. The boys train the puppies, and teach them how to do dogs' work; and the training is a training for the boys as well, for they copy all the tricks and mannerisms of the grown-up drivers, and take their toy sleds over cracks and hummocks and smooth sea ice just as they see their fathers do in the real work of the daily life.

Sometimes a boy can find a puppy, but no sled: then he fastens the pup to a block of ice, and makes him haul that, and if the going is good enough he seats himself upon the block both to give the puppy some weight to pull and to enjoy the ride for himself. One puppy at a time is enough for the ordinary boy; but I have seen a great lad trying to drive a team of three. You may imagine the tangle they made of it: the three of them were hardly ever all on their legs at the same

time, and when they were, they were wandering in different directions. First one would amble to the end of its trace, and stand tugging until it realised that it was fast; then it would lie down to whine and make queer whistling noises while the others made their move. For the most of the time the three puppies were lying down with their legs in the air, while the angry boy tugged and shouted at them.

Full grown dogs are easier to drive, for they have learnt their lesson; but when a boy is old enough to drive big dogs his playtime is over, for he must turn to the task of fetching seals and firewood. Sometimes for the sake of sheer merriment six or seven of the boys will slip the harness on their own shoulders and race away with a big sled, wheeling this way and that at the command of their driver.

They enter most heartily into the fun, crossing from one place to another in the team, just as dogs do, snapping and yelping and whining and tugging to be on the move every time the driver calls a halt.

Whatever game it be, you may be sure that they are playing it thoroughly, even though it be only the mischievous game of walking in the water and getting their boots wet. Mothers and fathers only wink at these water-

pranks; the boys are growing strong and hardy, and that is a great thing for a hunter; and, after all, their mischief is never malicious.

Springtime provides the most exciting game of the whole year, when the ice breaks, and the tides that come oozing up the beach bring great pans and little flat pieces floating shorewards.

A floating piece of ice makes a splendid raft, to Eskimo ways of thinking, and I have seen crowds of our Okak boys standing in ones and twos on these very unstable punts, and moving along by paddling with their hands in the water or prodding at the bottom with poles. The favourite idea is to put a boy on a big ice-pan and shove him away into deep water, and then, after leaving him helpless for a suitable time, to scramble and pole along to rescue him. Sometimes a dog is pressed into service to play this Robinson Crusoe sort of rôle; but the dog generally considers itself in real danger, and does not wait for a formal rescue; on the contrary, it takes matters into its own hands (or paws), and after a time of terrified whining slips miserably into the water and swims ashore.

I watched one bold spirit among the boys who had found a long and narrow piece of ice that struck him as a suitable kayak. He

tried hard to stand on it, but it was too wobbly, and time after time he only just escaped a ducking by great agility; at last he squatted on it tailorwise, balancing himself with his long two-handed "pautik" (paddle), and steered to and fro among the floating ice with all the skill and grace of the practised kayak man.

A boy came to our door one day, and asked for an empty meat tin. A few minutes later I saw a lot of them with harpoons, enjoying an imaginary seal hunt with the meat tin for quarry. They had flung it into a big pool left by the tide, and were taking turns at spearing it. They flung their heavy harpoons, and splashed through the water to fetch them, amid a chorus of triumph or derision according to their skill. Some of them were able to "kill" the tin every time, but the smaller ones found the harpoon too heavy; the inborn skill was there, for one little fellow had a toy spear of his own, and was flinging it like a thorough artist.

So these little hunters learn to be men.

But life is not all play, though it be playing at work. During the months of winter, when the people are grouped at the Mission stations, there are regular school hours for the children. Benjamin, our Okak schoolmaster, is a wise

man with a stern face and a kindly twinkle in his eyes.

I walked in one day when he was keeping school.

"What is four times four?" said Benjamin.

The little eyes stared, and the little mouths opened, and the little fingers began to count under the shadow of the desk. Benjamin made it easier. "I saw four sleds," he said.

There was a general heave of interest: Benjamin was going to tell them a story. They shuffled their feet and elbows, and settled down to listen. "I saw four sleds: they were coming round the bend from the sealing-place. Each sled had four dogs to pull it. How many dogs were there, gathered all together?"

That made thinking easy; the little brains had got something familiar to work upon; there was a picture of sleds in their minds, and like a flash came the answer, "Sixteen dogs—they are sixteen." "Yes," said Benjamin, "four times four makes sixteen; don't forget." The little faces were serious again: it was not much of a story, after all; but they had learnt something without expecting it. Wise man, Benjamin; he was an Eskimo child himself once, and has had a careful training from the missionaries; he

has learnt to present things in a way that the Eskimo mind can grasp. After a few more exercises with the table-book I saw the little eyes becoming restless; thoughts were beginning to wander; and Benjamin called for a change. Shock-headed little Moses fetched the books out of the cupboard, and handed them round, and the chubby faces brightened again.

Benjamin announced a psalm, and the little fingers grew busy as they turned the pages; and then I saw first one boy and then another stand up to spell through a verse. It was really wonderful to watch the eager way in which they pursued the alarming strings of letters that stretched from margin to margin, and gathered them into syllables under Benjamin's guidance, and made out the proper meaning. When the psalm was finished Moses collected the books; then the children sang a hymn and ran out to romp in the snow.

CHAPTER XIV

Winter weather—Klara and the clothes—Summertime—The boys in the sea—Mosquitoes—A Polar bear—Cod fishing—Building houses—The boys at play again.

THE cold winter weather of Labrador has no terrors for the Eskimos. As I walked along the village path, facing a wind that made my cheeks tingle, I often saw them standing bare-headed outside their doors, exchanging the gossip of the day, or working with bare hands when I was thankful for the warmth of my sealskin mitts. Klara, the rosy-faced girl who did our washing, used to go straight from the wash-tub into the open air on the bitterest winter mornings to hang out the clothes; and those were the mornings when we were muffled with blanket coats and sealskin smocks, and when we wore gloves lest our hands should freeze, and dared not touch the door knob with our bare fingers for fear of getting blistered by the touch of the icy metal.

If I happened to meet Klara in the passage with her basket of clothes I would say, "Klara,

it is very, very cold: you will get frost-bitten"; and Klara would burst into a loud laugh and mutter, "Eh, these English people," and then stand on the steps with the basket clasped in her bare arms, looking around at the weather and the scenery before going down the steps to shake the freezing clothes in the wind and hang them on the line. Sometimes in the middle of her hanging-out Klara would pause to stand laughing at her handiwork, and would call to the passers-by to look at the clothes and enjoy the joke; for as she shook the garments out and the wind caught them they froze stiff in an instant, and then they would hang and dangle and even stand upon the snow in queer human shapes—shirts with their arms straight out, and stockings like long stiff legs and pillow cases blown out tight like drums. All this was a great delight to the boys and girls of the village; but I could never understand how the drying went on when all the moisture was frozen in the clothes and they were pegged upon the line. I put a nice new clothes line for Klara in the kitchen; but unless a blizzard was raging she would have none of it. "No," she said, "I will hang the clothes out of doors: the frost will make them white."

It seemed strange to me that a land that

could be so cold as Labrador could be so comfortably warm as it sometimes was on days in the summer-time. Warm days did not come very often, and however much we English folk may have liked them, they were very unwelcome to the Eskimos. They would rather have the cold, any day. Poor things, they were prostrate with the heat, panting for air, while we were just enjoying the warmth of the sunshine. On warm days like that the boys spent their time in the sea.

They had a queer way of bathing: they just walked into the water, boots and clothes and all, and tumbled about.

They could not swim, but they were cool, and that was the main thing to their minds. "What a dreadful place England must be," they said, when I told them that our summer was ever so much warmer than theirs. "How marvellous to be hotter than this! Dreadful!" And so they spent their warm days, perched upon a stone in their wet clothes, or wallowing in the shallow sea, as long as the sun was high; and when the cool of the evening came they ran about the beach in their wet clothes until they were dry.

Summer does not last long in Labrador: at the best it is no more than eight weeks of days that are pleasantly warm, and the

evenings are always cool and chilly, and most of the nights are frosty. It seems a pity that the short summer should be spoiled by the gnats, but so it is.

Just when you are thankful that the winter's cold is over, and just when you begin to find the days warm enough to be enjoyable, the time of the gnats begins. From the beginning of July to the end of August, and even later, the summer air of Labrador swarms with countless hosts of the blood-thirsty creatures.

Mosquitoes, we call them; and rightly, I suppose, for their scientific name is Culex; and they live fully up to the evil repute that their family has for biting and stinging and buzzing and swarming around. How, thought I, can one be expected to enjoy this lovely scenery, these otherwise delightful walks among the hills, if one is compelled to be encased in a gauze veil and a pair of thick gloves? The buzzing creatures perch on the meshes of your veil, and you can see them striving to get through; if you have not adopted Eskimo boots, which reach up to your knees, they climb about your knitted socks, and sit there, biting your ankles between the strands of wool, and you can almost imagine them kicking their heels with delight at the convenience of having

something to stand on while they ply their nefarious trade.

There is a hideous fascination about watching the mosquitoes: you may slap and dance, but however many you may kill there are always plenty waiting their turn, and the only satisfaction you get is in the knowledge that new-comers receive an extra share of their attentions, and that some day you will be hardened. The first bites may produce really alarming results. I am sure that I took all due precautions the first night that I slept on shore in Labrador, but a mosquito must have crawled under my door in the darkness, for in the morning I could only open one eye, and the question that greeted me at the breakfast table was, "Have you bumped yourself?"

Summer in Labrador may seem a quiet time from the hunter's point of view; there are no foxes or wolves to trap; and though there may be black bears away up the river-banks of the mainland not many folks have the time to go after them, for the summer fur is not of much value and the bear is only useful for his meat. Polar bears sometimes come our way in the summer-time, and then there is a furious hunt, followed by a great deal of chattering over the pipes in the evening; but the most of the white bears have retreated to the

Button Islands and to other desolate places where there is no smell of man to disturb them. A beady-eyed little Eskimo came into my room one evening, hugging a bulky package which he dumped upon the floor. "Nennok (polar bear)," he explained, "half of him: you buy him, eh?" He unrolled his package and named his price, and I found myself looking at the hinder half of a huge bearskin. "Where is the rest of him?" I asked: and then I got the story.

It seems that this man and another were out in a little boat, fishing for cod, when they saw a white bear swimming in the sea. Like true Eskimos they fell to their oars, and got the boat between the bear and the shore so as to head him off. They had no gun and no harpoon, but this did not matter to them: their great idea was that they were within hunting distance of a nennok, and hunt him they would. They chased him to and fro until he began to tire, and then they assailed him with their oars, hammering prodigiously at his head. The bear tried to get into the boat, and at that they hammered the more until they had him stunned and helpless. Then they towed his carcase ashore and set about sharing him. It did hot happen to strike them that they might sell the skin and

share the money, and so reap a reasonable reward for their adventure : no, they cut the bear in two, and each appropriated an end. They were digusted to find that they had entirely spoiled the market value of the skin by cutting it : no trader wanted half a bear ! But I have that piece of bearskin to-day to remind me of the pluck of those two men, who captured a polar bear with no better weapon than their oars.

But a bear hunt is quite an unusual thing : it is the cod fishing that makes the months of August and September the busiest in the whole year.

Day in and day out the boats are on the water, with men and boys sitting in them fishing from morning till night—aye, and all night long if fish are plentiful. It is a big test of Eskimo patience, to jerk the bright leaden lure, with its two barbed hooks, up and down within a few feet of the bottom of the sea ; jerk, jerk, jerk, hour after hour, when fish are rather scarce and only the plodder can hope to succeed ; but there come times when the fish are so plentiful that they are on the hook before it is well sunk, and there is a spice of excitement in hauling up as fast as your hands can pull, and dropping the hook again for more and more and more. But in

spite of the excitement, "jigging," as it is called among the fishermen, is horribly cold work on dull, bleak days, and I was not surprised to find the Eskimos wearing gloves of seal leather on their plump hands to prevent the line from chafing them. In ordinary times the men and boys do the fishing, and leave the women and girls to attend to the splitting and salting, but when they light upon one of the vast shoals of fish that seem to swarm from place to place, the whole family goes out in the boat, and the baby in the mother's hood is the only one that seems too small to ply the jigger, and tiny children somehow manage, with much struggle and determination, to land fish almost as big as themselves.

After the end of the summer comes the time for building houses. The fish is all dried and bundled for market; the seal hunt has not yet begun, and the men have time to mend their homes or to build themselves new ones. Timber for houses can be had for the fetching, though the woods may be twenty miles away, and though the men of the northernmost villages have no woods at all, but need to rely on those living nearer the trees to cut planks for them.

And this is the way that the Eskimo sets about his work, when once he has made up

his mind that he will build himself a nice new wooden home.

Some fine spring morning he calls his dogs together, and hies him to the woods. He builds a tiny snow hut for shelter, and lives on tough dried meat. He is after timber for a house, and from dawn to dusk he searches for the best of the poor stunted trees and chops them down. Then he builds a sort of scaffold, and gets his wife to help him saw the planks. Many a time have I seen them at work with their big pit-saws : the man is top sawyer on the scaffold, while the woman stands below and does her share, and so they get planks for their home. Building begins later on, for the seal hunting and the cod fishing are too important to be missed ; but, sooner or later, before the next winter is due the Eskimo gets busy. He lays a foundation of stones from the beach or the hillside, and builds his beams and joists upon it ; he works long hours, intent and serious, until he can proudly fling his tools down and say, " My house is built."

So your Eskimo gets his house : now to teach him to keep it nice ! That is the difficulty. I wanted the men to make windows that could be opened—quite a new thing for them, for the old Eskimo huts had hardly any window at all, and never a whiff of fresh air

excepting when somebody coming in hastily opened the door and hastily banged it shut again. So I did a great amount of thinking about those windows, and this is the way the solution came.

Tomas was building a new house, and he came to me with a very simple request. "I want to build a good house," he said, "because I catch many seals. I want glass windows, not windows of seals' bowels: I want to be able to see out of my windows when the days are fine. Can you find me a piece of proper wood for a window frame among the wood that you have?" "By all means," I told him; "here is a piece of soft pine: and you shall have it without payment if you will make a window like this of mine that opens on hinges." Tomas studied my window, and opened it and shut it, and grinned, and looked at me—and coveted that piece of pine. "Yes," he said, "it shall be"; and off he trotted with his prize—surely the first Eskimo house-improvements prize! I walked along several times to see how he was getting along with his new house and his new window; and I found that another man, quite a poor fellow, who was building himself a tiny hut near by, was also making a window to open. He had seen Tomas at work, and, of course, was

inquisitive. "Hello, Tomas, what sort of a window are you making?" "Ah," says Tomas, "new sort, very fine; see, it opens on hinges." "Piovok (that looks good): teach me how to do it; I must have a window like that."

Yes, the Eskimos would imitate; that was the secret. And they imitate so thoroughly, too: you may see it even in the children's games. One day there had been a funeral, and after it was all over I heard the sound of singing. It was the funeral hymn over again!

I looked out, and saw a group of boys, all standing round a long hole in the snow, and singing lustily. When their singing was finished they heaped snow into the hole, and built it into a mound, and very deliberately patted it smooth and then walked off two by two towards the village. I could not help laughing at the young rascals, for I suppose all children play at funerals. But these little Eskimos were doing things properly, for after the mock-mourners had all gone the mound gave a great heave, and a small boy poked his head up and crawled out, shaking the snow out of his shaggy hair as he ran to join his mates.

Yes, the Eskimos would imitate. If Moses had dug up the sodden mud floor of his hut,

and replaced it with a neat layer of boards, sure enough somebody else would want to do the same, and there would be a great time of digging and boarding. Some of the men went off to the wood for planks; others, who had not dogs enough, or who were too poor to spare the time, came to beg or buy our old packing-cases. Some of them seemed to think the marks on the cases a grand ornamentation of the floor, for they turned the boards the proper way up, so that the floors told tales of "Cube Sugar" and "Prime Lard" and "per *Harmony* to Okak." But the boards were there, and the trampled slush that I have had to splash through on my visits, and that reeked of what Shakespeare might have had in mind when he wrote "a very ancient and fish-like smell," was abolished.

CHAPTER XV

Some stories of a Mission Hospital.

SO far I have made this little book to tell something of the Eskimos as they are in their daily life, and something of the land and the homes in which they dwell; and now, before bringing my story to a close, I am going to say something of the life that we live as missionary workers among the people. "Some Stories of a Mission Hospital" is the title that I have chosen for this chapter, and that is a title that explains itself. If you were to visit the village of Okak to-day, you would see the neatly painted hospital standing by the side of the brook, with the church spire towering near at hand; you would go in and see the rooms where the sick folks are; you would see the piled-up benches in the waiting-room downstairs; you would see the wood shed and the storeroom and the attic where the hard dry fish is hung—a sort of larder of odd-looking Eskimo dainties; you might meet a brown-faced little woman on the stairs, a woman with black hair plastered tightly on

her head, and her little beady brown eyes all aglow with the excitement of seeing a visitor, and from her neat white apron and the business-like way in which she trots about in her soft sealskin boots you would judge, and rightly, too, that she is the Eskimo nurse.

In the summer the windows are wide open, with wire gauze to keep the gnats away ; and through those open windows you can hear the sounds of the village, and the rustle of the tides upon the pebbly beach, and the babbling of the brook that runs close by. The brook looks harmless enough ; too small to harbour even the smallest of fishes, and so quiet and sedate in its course that the Eskimo women come and do their family washing in the pools. They have a queer way of doing it : they soap the clothes well, then drop them in the water and trample on them ; and if you looked out of the window you might see two or three of them standing in the pool where the brook widens just outside the hospital railings, standing with their soft sealskin boots upon their feet, and tramp, tramp, tramping on the week's washing as though they were doing a slow sort of Eskimo jig. And as they tramp they chatter and laugh. This is the quiet little Okak brook in the summer-time, tumbling and trickling

down the slope of the hillside from the spring in the swamps, an innocent, harmless little brook. But when the winter snow is melting in the month of June, then the little brook becomes a roaring torrent; and once I have seen it burst its banks, and come thundering down against the back wall of the hospital, threatening to wash the building off its foundation, and battering against the kitchen wall until a gang of willing little Eskimos, armed with hatchets and shovels and picks, managed to dig a channel for it through the snowdrift in another direction.

So much for the brook.

The other end of the hospital looks over the village, and the sick folk love to lie there gazing through the windows, watching the sleds going to and fro, and the hunters dragging seals up the hill, and the children tumbling and romping in the snowdrifts. They get better the quicker, as you may well imagine, for the happiness of seeing all that goes on.

Downstairs is the big waiting-room where the people have their morning prayers. Soon after the building of the hospital I told the people that I thought that it would be a good idea to start each day's work with morning prayers. The word I happened to use—the

morning singing—caught their fancy at once, for singing always appeals to them. A grim-faced deputation called upon me to know if it was true that there was going to be singing at nine o'clock. "Yes," said I. "Then the people want to know if they may come, even when they are not sick, just for the singing, and then go home again." "By all means, let them come and help with the singing." And the deputation retired, smiling and nakomêk-ing.

"Now," thought I, "we are likely to have a crowd: what are we to do for benches?" I set a small boy to scour the village for the two worthies who shared the honourable and responsible position of public carpenter; and when, after a due interval, they arrived, having been discovered, without doubt, sharing a solid meal of fresh seal meat in some hunter's house, I took them into my plans. Peter and David, the worthy carpenters in question, nodded sagely and said "Taimak" (so be it); and we made our way to the attic. There we attacked the disused packing-cases, and knocked them to pieces and pulled the nails out, and planed the boards to a reasonable smoothness, and by dint of much measuring and sawing and hammering evolved a dozen very decent little benches out of the pile.

No Mission hospital ever had cheaper furniture than our amateur benches; but they served their purpose, and, for all that I know to the contrary, they are doing duty at Okak Hospital to this day. On the advice of Peter and David we made them nice and low, to suit the short Eskimo legs; and though we did not paint them they always looked spruce, for Sarah and Valeria, the two charwomen, took great pride in scrubbing them. I was well satisfied with the benches, because the Eskimos liked them.

As I had expected, the room was packed to the utmost on the first day of the singing. There were seats for about fifty, and as "first come, first served" was to be the rule, the people began to come early. By a quarter to nine there was a crowd on the doorsteps, a jolly tempered mob, clinging to the railings and jostling to get nearer to the door, and constantly reinforced by new arrivals from all parts of the village.

An avalanche of boisterous humanity surged in and nearly overwhelmed me when I opened the door upon the stroke of nine, and the benches were full long before the stream of people had ceased; but the folk were determined to get in. Those who could not find room on the benches squatted on the floor,

and those who were unable even to nudge their way into places on the floor stayed in the passage or sat on the stairs, and we left the door open so that they might join in the singing.

Among the people on the floor between the benches I saw big Josef, the mightiest hunter (and therefore the richest man) in Okak; in heathen times he would have been a sort of king among the people because he was so tall and because he was the best hunter, but he seemed quite happy on the floor.

We sang a well-known hymn, and the place shook with the delightful noise. I like to look back upon that morning; I seem to see again the crowd of faces, all wrinkling with pleasure and perspiring with the warmth, and I seem to hear again the tremendous harmony that filled the room.

That was the first of many happy mornings; and though the novelty of the thing was a great attraction in the beginning, the people still came when the novelty had long worn off, and morning by morning, when nine o'clock struck, our benches were packed with an eager crowd.

There was a catastrophe at one of our nine o'clock meetings, in which one of our little benches played the leading part. When four

good solid Eskimos were seated on each of them, the benches were well laden, and I used to feel some apprehension as I watched the people edging closer and closer together to make room for "just one more." I felt sure that the last straw would be reached some day, but the people always said, "Namatuinarput" (they are quite all right) when I expressed my fears. But the last straw came —and a very substantial last straw it was— in the person of big Tabea. She came in rather late one morning and stood looking round for a place with all the dignity and consequence of the prosperous middle-aged Eskimo matron. There were no empty seats, but a comfortable-looking party of village worthies made room—or an apology for room —for her in the middle of their well-filled bench. Tabea sat down ponderously and with deliberation; there was an ominous creaking and the bench collapsed with a clatter, heaping its occupants into a wild scrimmage on the floor. I could hardly keep my face straight when I saw them shove the broken bench aside and compose themselves upon the floor as gravely as you please.

If all this had happened out of doors they would have laughed, I have no doubt; but this was meeting-time, when folks do not

laugh; and it speaks well for the gravity of the Eskimo character that the ludicrous spectacle of the collapsing bench and the struggling dignitaries on the floor did not even cause a titter.

Morning prayers, or the "Morning Singing" as the Eskimos called it, was the beginning of the day's work; and I might fill many pages with tales of the odd happenings that sometimes made up the daily round of our hospital.

There were always some who stayed behind after the singing to talk about some ailment that was troubling them.

Their usual way of describing pain was to say that they were "broken." When a man said, "My leg is broken: my arm is broken," he only meant that he had a pain in his leg or his arm; but you may imagine how alarming and terrible it all seemed until we learnt to understand this queer way of saying things. "Little Gustaf has fallen and broken his back," cried an excited little mother, as she came running up the hospital steps—but little Gustaf, after all, had only fallen and bruised himself, and was playing about almost as lively as ever by the time his mother reached home again. And when a man came with a bad cold, and told of aches and pains in his

head and his legs and his back and his arms —" all broken "—he would look at his bottle of medicine and shake his puzzled head, and wonder how the different things in the bottle would know to find their way to all the different places where he had his aches.

And the language! What troubles there were with those long words! How we used to chase those strings of letters through the pages of the grammar book, trying to make them mean just what we wanted to say! Sarah, our little charwoman, who swept the floors and scrubbed the benches and did the washing and made herself as useful as she could in all the ways that she could find, went into fits of laughing one day because the nurse told her that the doctor was up in Heaven—when the doctor was only up in the attic where the dried fish was stored: he was " up high," and the nurse just turned the word a little bit wrong. Sarah used to chuckle about that joke for a long time afterwards, and tell it to the people who came to the door, so that they might laugh too! If I had to give a man two pills to take at different times, I had to tell him how to swallow one little pill, and then at the proper time to swallow the little pill's wife! It all sounds so funny to us, but it is just the Eskimo way of saying

things, and sounds quite ordinary to Eskimo ears.

There is plenty of incident in a doctor's daily round in Labrador, though it be only in the mild form of peeps at typical Eskimo life, or small adventures such as falls down great snow pits or even a plunge through the roof of a buried hut or a sudden and painful descent into a sort of cave full of vicious sled dogs which was the householder's buried snow porch.

Another very interesting thing was the feeding of the sick. They were Eskimos, and must have Eskimo foods; so in order to let them have the foods they liked, we allowed their friends to bring things for them.

I might make a long list of the foods the people brought—seal meat raw, dried, boiled, fried, and even made into a stew with flour and giving forth a most appetising smell; the flesh of reindeer, foxes, bears, hares, sea birds of all sorts; eggs of gulls, sea pigeons and ptarmigan, the gulls' eggs especially being sometimes in a half-hatched state, with great, awful-looking eyes inside them; trout and cod and salmon; the boiled skin of the white whale and the walrus; raw reindeer lips and ears—these are only some of the peculiarly Eskimo dishes that passed before our eyes;

to say nothing of attempts at European cookery, such as home-baked bread, sometimes grey and sodden, sometimes light and wholesome, so that we wondered how Eskimo hands and Eskimo stoves could bake so well; roasted dough, as hard as bricks, a concoction of flour and water baked on the top of a tiny iron stove; and even, on festal occasions, dough with currants.

There are memories, too, of the people who passed through the hospital wards: there is the man who was brought ninety miles over the mountain pass from Nain, with the two noble fellows who had offered to bring him pushing on and on through a blizzard, forgetting themselves and their weariness because they knew he must be brought quickly: there is young Jerry, who came sixty miles with a broken leg, tied fast upon a dog sled: there is little Kettura. Kettura is a brisk little housewife who came as a passenger upon her husband's sled to have treatment for her eyes.

For a week she had to be blindfolded; and there she sat on her bed in the ward, with both eyes bandaged over, singing in her clear sweet voice, and improvising an accompaniment on an old guitar. As we went about our work we could hear the twankle-twankle of

the strings and the quaint sound of her singing, hour after hour, tune after tune, as the happy little woman made her fellow patients bright in spite of her own darkness.

CHAPTER XVI

The life of a missionary.

LONG years ago, when the missionaries first came to Labrador, their life was as lonely as life can well be.

The ship brought them in the summer-time, and then sailed away and left them to their long, cold winter.

When the winter ice had broken, and the great sea was once more open for the ship to return, they began to look forward to the greatest day of all their year, the Coming of the Ship. And so, once a year, the ship came, bringing news from home, and stores of meat and flour so that there should be no want through the next winter. Lonely it must have seemed, to live shut off from the world by the ice and the storms and the dreadful cold of the Labrador winter, locked in because the sea is frozen all along the coast, and no ship can venture.

But in spite of all, those old-time missionaries were happy. Lonely they must have felt, far from their friends and their home, hearing no voices but the strange rough sounds

of the language of the Eskimos around them; but they were happy. They were telling the good news of the Gospel of Christ to one of the strangest and loneliest of peoples, in a land where you would hardly have thought that any man but an Eskimo could live; and the joy of their work was their reward.

Perhaps Labrador is not quite so lonely nowadays: fishing vessels come along the coast in the summer; a mail steamer sent by Government bustles to and fro; but still the great sea freezes as before; for eight months of the year the lonely coast of Labrador is closed by the ice. And so it is that to-day, just as in the days gone by, the missionary lives his lonely life during all that long winter, happy in his work, teaching the little children, holding service in the church, translating hymns and stories for the Eskimos to sing and read, and visiting the people in their huts and at their lonely hunting places. And just as in the old days, the Coming of the Ship is the great day of the year.

In the month of July, when the ice had floated away, and the tides came rustling up the beach once more, we began to take our walks upon the hillsides, and to look out over the wide sea, watching and waiting for the ship. We wrote our letters; we made room in the

storeroom for the new supplies of food; we talked and talked about the ship—we could talk of nothing else. And then, in spite of all our waiting, we were taken by surprise. Suddenly, suddenly, there came a shout.

"Pujoliarluit" (the big steamer), it roared and shrilled from all parts of the village. Guns banged; people came running, shouting as they ran, racing for the jetty; and out on the bay a man was paddling home as if for dear life. As soon as he was near enough to be heard he yelled, "A fire on Parkavik." That was enough; a fire on the beach might be cookery, but a fire on the hill was the signal; and he in his kayak had seen the smoke and had fired the two bangs with his gun that the people understood. Boats came bustling across the bay, with sails spread and oars all busy: and in half an hour the quiet village was populous again. Every house seemed to have a flag, from the big red ensign on the Mission flagstaff to the bandanna handkerchief that was fluttering on an oar out of somebody's window. Even the old widow in the hut behind the hospital was entering into the spirit of the day; she had no flag, but she had sacrificed her red petticoat, and was scrambling up her roof to pin it to a tent pole propped against the eaves.

It was an hour or more before the ship came into sight, and then, when the tall masts came peeping over the rocks of the point and the little black hull slipped silently into the mouth of the bay, the shouting and banging began afresh. The men were wild with glee : I saw one brawny fellow with a Winchester repeater letting off round after round in his delight, until he had shot away enough cartridges to account for dozens of prospective seals ; he was as delighted as we, and that was his way of showing it.

The ship came on and on, looking strangely near in the clear air ; we could see the fur-clad captain on the bridge, and the first mate standing on the bow, just over the painted angel that spreads her wings beneath the bowsprit.

The mate's hand rose : there was a sharp clatter, and the anchor plunged into the water. At the same moment Jerry the organist raised his voice, and the people joined in their hymn of thanks : " Now let us praise the Lord."

" Gud nakorilavut
Omamut illûnanut."

There was just one hint of sadness about the coming of the ship. One evening in the winter the missionary might say to his wife,

"Our little Harry is getting a big boy now: he is seven years old: we must send him home to school"—and the mother would nod her head and smile bravely, and begin to knit stockings and make new flannel shirts for her boy. Perhaps she cried at times over her sewing; but Harry himself was all excitement. He ran across to tell his friends. "When the ship comes I am to go home to England: I am to go to school, and I shall see London: I shall spend my holidays with my grandfather. Oh, how fine it will be."

The ship comes, and the little boy's box is carried on board: the child himself is shown the tiny cabin where he is to sleep on the journey, and the captain takes him by the hand and shows him all the wonders of the ship. They all have tea together in the captain's cabin on that last evening; and the mother kisses her boy and tries not to let him see that she is crying, and the father tells him, "Be a good boy, my son, and remember to send us a letter as often as you can."

Then the parents go ashore to their lonely home; and in the morning the ship is gone, and maybe Harry will be a big boy before he sees his mother and father again.

If he is a wise boy he will remember what

was said to him about letters, for even in Labrador we have a postman.

True, he does not come very often: the mail steamer bustles along in the summer, and during the winter we always had a little Labrador post of our own.

On the 20th of January big Josef started south with his sled and dogs, to meet the messenger from the southern stations at Nain. After a stay of two or three days to give the Nain missionaries time to read and answer their letters—days which Josef spent in going the round of the village and delivering the laborious salutations of which the Eskimos are so fond—he travelled back again. We used to meet him as he drove up to the Mission house, and shake his great hand, and smile, and tell him we were glad to see him—and so we were.

Sometimes there were a few belated European letters in the bag, a welcome spice in the pile of coast news; aye, we knew what it was to feel thankful for the postman, in Labrador.

Next day Jerry would take the mail sled northward, while Josef rested on his laurels and told tales of his trip, and delivered himself of his burden of salutations. He went about it with great solemnity. He had all

the greetings written down, and usually called a mass meeting in one of the huts to get rid of the most of them. Sometimes he had a general message to deliver, and in such a case he would beg leave to announce it after one of the meetings in church. The congregation sat quietly in their places, while big Josef rose and stalked solemnly to the missionary's table. "Jonas and his wife, Nainemiut (Nain people), send greetings to all the people of Okak," he would say in his quiet voice, and then make his dignified way to his seat by the door, while the people shuffled and began to pick up their hymn books ready for home.

Jerry, our northern postman, was a great man for adventures; he generally had something out of the common to relate.

Once he broke through thin ice on a river, and had to run all day long to keep his clothes from setting stiff and jointless—he must have known what the old knights felt like in their armour: another time he was caught in a storm, and had to spend a couple of awful nights among the rocks and the snow. When he wanted a drink of warm tea, he cut chips off his sled and made a fire. So much for our great luxury, the postman.

It may seem strange to talk of gardening in so bleak a place as Labrador, but, strange

as it may seem, when the July sun had melted the snow and thawed the ground, we used to grow flowers and vegetables. All the little shoots must first be carefully grown in boxes in our living rooms, or under a cover of glass; and you can imagine how anxiously we watched for the tiny green leaves to peep above the soil, and how proudly we saw them grow large enough and strong enough to be put in the open ground. I suppose that the missionaries of long ago had toilsomely made the gardens, wheeling barrow-loads of earth from here and there; why, even at that bleak and rocky spot called Killinek, where a Mission station was opened a few years ago, away at the northernmost tip of Labrador, there is the beginning of a garden, and the missionary talked to me of borrowing a couple of barrels of earth from our garden at Okak! The gardens need a great deal of care and nursing, for we had always three enemies to fight against—the dogs, and the mice, and the frosts.

The dogs were delighted to have a patch of freshly dug soil for their romps and their scrambles, but we managed to keep them out by the help of wooden palings. Sometimes they climbed over, or burrowed underneath, and then it was good-bye to our garden stuff;

but mostly we made things secure enough to baffle them. The mice were a more serious nuisance: they were wide-awake and very hungry, and found our nice young shoots of lettuce and cabbage very tempting, far better than buried twigs and frozen roots. It was rather a laborious thing to have to do, but in years when mice were plentiful we went round every evening and covered each shoot with an empty meat tin, and made a second pilgrimage in the morning to uncover them all again. The frost we fought by covering each row with a wooden framework; and the old widows who worked in the blubber yard made it their annual care to go round at night and spread sacks over the frame, and to take the sacks off and put them away every morning. For this they got a present of a couple of dollars and an armful of green vegetables at the end of the season, and shrill were their cries of "Nakomêk," and broad were their grins of happiness, when the time came for them to get their perquisite.

There are many pleasant things to remember in a missionary's life in Labrador. We forget the cold and the hardships when we think of the smiling, friendly faces of the Eskimos; we forget the loneliness of the long, long winter when we think of the many little things

that come, even in Labrador, to make life bright. How charming it is to hear the sound of music on a dark Christmas morning, when you waken with the frost of your breath upon the pillow and the windows caked with thick soft snow. On the snowdrift outside stands Jerry with his troop of bandsmen: there are small boys holding lanterns to show the players their notes. The cold air nips their fingers, the snow powders down upon their heads; but they puff lustily at their trumpets so that you may wake to the sound of a Christmas hymn. And so they move from house to house, delighting the village with their inspiring noise.

Jerry likes best to encircle himself with the bombardon, to lend a solid foundation to the harmony; but if one of the men is away he is quite able to take the cornet or horn or whatever it may be, and leave the bottom notes for Benjamin's trombone. It is hard work, but the bandsmen are happy; the morning frost may settle on their heads, the moisture may freeze inside their trumpets in spite of shawls and stockings wrapped round them, the mouthpieces may stick to their lips with the cold; but they are Eskimos; winter weather does not easily daunt them or numb their fingers; and, besides, to play a trumpet

in the band is one of the greatest honours that an Eskimo knows.

And what more delightful thing can there be than to watch the Eskimos trooping to church on a winter's day! In a long stream they come pouring from the houses, a winding line of trim little figures, clad in silvery furs or red-tipped blanket, or in newly-washed calico overalls, some with their heads bare to the wind and the snow, and their shaggy black hair hanging over their ears, some with the peaked hood that we know so well from the pictures. They trudge along the narrow path in single file, and the little children stretch their baby legs to tramp in the foot-prints of the older people—funny little souls, those children, they find it easier, no doubt, to plant their feet in the deep footprints of their elders than to make new holes in the snow for themselves; and, besides, it pleases them to plod with long strides like the grown-ups. And so you see the people marching on, grave and sedate, while the church bell clangs from the tower.

They march into the porch, and you hear them stamping their feet to beat off the snow that clings to them; the bell ceases its clanging; an old man, bell-ringer and keeper of the door, puts out his head and peers around

for stragglers or late-comers, then shuts the door and goes in after the others. And inside the church the people are singing, singing a hymn, maybe, that you know quite well, while Jerry at the old pipe organ leads them on in stately time. Then the missionary prays and reads and tells the people once again of Christ the Saviour; and as he looks around on the sea of faces, eager and intent, he thanks God for the truth that from every nation and tribe and people there shall be gathered those who love the name of Christ.

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